ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY
A15043113265

Hugh Murdoch MacMillan

•A15043 113265

OP '90

25-

10

A SHORT HISTORY OF THE BRONTËS

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2025

https://archive.org/details/bwb_S0-DTV-545

THE ROOM WHERE EMILY BRONTË DIED

As it is now

A SHORT HISTORY OF THE BRONTËS

By K. A. R. SUGDEN

PR
4168
.S8
West

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS
LONDON: HUMPHREY MILFORD
1929

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS
AMEN HOUSE, E.C. 4
LONDON EDINBURGH GLASGOW
LEIPZIG NEW YORK TORONTO
MELBOURNE CAPETOWN BOMBAY
CALCUTTA MADRAS SHANGHAI
HUMPHREY MILFORD
PUBLISHER TO THE
UNIVERSITY

Printed in Great Britain

FOREWORD

TWO excuses should be given for writing yet another book about the Brontës. First, the Old Parsonage at Haworth, the house which is the centre and cradle of their greatness, has now become accessible to the world, and for the first time the ordinary visitor can wander at will through the rooms where they lived and died. Secondly, people are beginning to write fanciful tales about them, some almost under the guise of fiction, others obviously inventing things that have neither evidence nor probability. It seemed then that there was possibly room for a slim, handy, frigid work, in which the details and events of the career of the Brontë family should be set out in order, without much embroidery or many theories, but containing most of the information now available, given in due proportion. Perhaps a third excuse is the enthusiasm natural to one born and bred not many miles from Haworth.

It is my duty to express my indebtedness to many of the books mentioned in Appendix III; and to thank the Authorities of the National Portrait Gallery for allowing Branwell Brontë's painting of his sisters to be reproduced here, and the Trustees of the Brontë

Museum for permitting two views of Haworth Parsonage to be included. Both the latter are printed from photographs kindly taken for the purpose by Mr. H. W. Young of Brighouse, Yorkshire.

K. A. R. S.

Rugby,
February 1929.

CONTENTS

I. Before Haworth 1
II. The Old Parsonage 7
III. Childhood and Beyond 11
IV. Brussels 28
V. Literary Adventure 38
VI. Tragedy 62
VII. Fame 72
VIII. The End of the Story 95
IX. The Verdict of Posterity . . . 107
X. The Brontë Problems 112

Appendix I. Portraits 117
II. Chronology 119
III. Bibliography 121

ILLUSTRATIONS

The Room where Emily Brontë died (as it is now) . . . . . *Frontispiece*

Branwell Brontë's Portrait of his Sisters (painted about 1835) . . *facing page* 24

Haworth Parsonage . . . „ 104

I

BEFORE HAWORTH

PATRICK BRUNTY was born on the 17th of March 1777 at Emdale, County Down, Ireland. He was one of the ten children of a farmer in a humble position, but before he was very old he showed so clearly that his gifts of mind were superior to those usually found in the children of Irish farmers, that it was decided to let him aim at becoming a clergyman. He found a kind and generous patron in the Rev. Mr. Tighe, the incumbent of Drumgorland and Drumballyroony; and by the time he was sixteen he held the post of assistant to the village schoolmaster at Drumgorland. We shall never know what sacrifices he and his folks made during the next nine years—he certainly sent many regular gifts of money, as though in grateful repayment, to his Irish relations as soon as he became self-supporting; but we do know that he was in a position to enter his name on the college books at St. John's College, Cambridge, when he was twenty-five. About that time England was in grave peril of invasion, and the young Irish countryman learned his drill in the ranks with a young Irish viscount, Lord Palmerston; about that time, too, the world was ringing with the fame of the exploits of Horatio Nelson, upon whom the dukedom

of Brontë had been conferred by the King of Spain, and from his college days onward Patrick always dropped the *y*, and spelt his name Brontë. After Cambridge he took orders in 1806, and became curate successively at Weatherfield in Essex, where as we learn from four remarkable letters dated 1823 and 1824 and first published in the *Sphere* in 1913, he had a love affair with one of his parishioners, Miss Mary Burder; then at Wellington in Shropshire; then at Dewsbury in Yorkshire; and then in 1811 he was appointed curate-in-charge of Hartshead-cum-Clifton in the same county.

The ordinary Englishman of the south country is grievously ignorant of the West Riding of Yorkshire except possibly through claims of business. He imagines that it is as unattractive as the North Riding is beautiful, and pictures it as an ugly region, dotted with a number of smallish, grimy towns in great profusion, all of them full of 'dark, Satanic mills'. As a matter of fact, until the Industrial Revolution at the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth changed the face of the western parts of Yorkshire and the eastern parts of Lancashire, the hills and rivers and moors of the West Riding were as impressive as any of the most beautiful parts of England. But whereas the Swale and the Ure and the Wharfe are for the most part shallow, rushing torrents, the Ouse and the Colne and the Calder are

deep sluggish streams, partially navigable and easily linked up by a system of canals; moreover, there is coal at hand ready to be mined; and these two facts explain why by the early years of the nineteenth century one of the fairest parts of our country had been blackened and transformed. Yet there are still, even to-day, pleasant oases in the heart of this district, and one of these is Hartshead. The village with its Norman church stands high on a green knoll not far from the river Calder and the main road from Huddersfield to Leeds, and within the parish is an old Jacobean house, built on the site of a Cistercian nunnery, called Kirklees Priory, where Mr. Brontë's lay-rector, Sir George Armytage, lived. In the Priory grounds one finds what is called the tomb of Robin Hood, a relic of much local celebrity. It is hard to say what Robin Hood is doing so far north of his beloved Sherwood Forest; but the story goes that he was buried where an arrow fell shot by his dying hands, and in the Middle Ages the local peasantry found that a fragment of the stone from his tomb made an effective remedy for the toothache.[1]

It was at Hartshead that the Rev. Patrick Brontë lived and ministered from 1811 to 1815; here he learned the habit of carrying a pistol for his protection, for the district was at that time much disturbed

[1] Kirklees Priory was Charlotte Brontë's model for Ferndean Manor in *Jane Eyre*, and for Nunnely in *Shirley*.

by the Luddite riots, caused by the discontent of the workers in the mills and their dislike of the machinery which was then being introduced; here he made friends with the local mill-owners, at the house of one of whom he met the lady he married, Miss Maria Branwell, who was on a visit from her home at Penzance to her uncle, the Rev. John Fennell, the headmaster of the Woodhouse Grove Wesleyan Academy. The marriage took place on 29 December 1812, and the two eldest children were born while the young couple were still at Hartshead, Maria, born 1813, and Elizabeth, born 1815. In Waterloo year he was transferred to the charge of the curacy of Thornton, some eight miles to the north of Hartshead, a cure which was under the direction of the Vicar of Bradford. At Thornton, where the Brontës spent five years, the remaining four children were born, Charlotte in 1816, Patrick Branwell in 1817, Emily Jane in 1818, and Anne in 1820. There is still in existence the diary of a Miss Elizabeth Firth, subsequently the wife of the Rev. James Franks, Vicar of Huddersfield, in which the names of both the parents and the children frequently occur; indeed Miss Firth was godmother to both Elizabeth and Anne. Then in 1820, after what was probably the happiest period of his life, Mr. Brontë made his last removal when he was promoted to the Incumbency of Haworth, near Keighley, five miles from Thornton, where he

was well pleased, as he himself has recorded, to be his own master. 'My salary is not large, it is only about £200 a year. But in addition to this two hundred a year I have a good House, which is mine for life also, and is rent free. No one has anything to do with the Church but myself, and I have a large congregation.'

Haworth and the country to the east of the village have changed considerably and become much more civilized since 1820. A railway now runs in the valley which winds its way from Keighley, four miles distant. There is a service of motor omnibuses to Leeds and Bradford and Halifax. The roads which approach the place are broad and well paved. There is a fine, open public park, with seats and shelters and a bandstand, at the foot of the hill. Half-way up is the Brontë Cinema. The large church is entirely rebuilt, though it has kept much the same shape externally and dimensions as the old one. A new wing has been added to the parsonage. But there are certain features which have not changed. There is still the steep, almost precipitous climb to the summit of Haworth hill on which stand the 'Black Bull' Inn, and the church, and the parsonage, a hill so high that the square tower of the church presides over the landscape for many miles. There is still a multitude of gravestones, a few upright and ornate, but most of them flat and black, dominating the

place. And there is still the sweep of lonely moorland, grim slopes covered with coarse reeds, dark pools, and clumps of heather or of bilberry, stretching out illimitably to the west. Civilization has not encroached upon them; as at the time of the Rev. Patrick Brontë's induction to Haworth, the visitor passes through a gap in the wall just beyond the house, crosses two or three fields, and is 'on the moors'.

The inhabitants of Haworth were able to tell the pilgrims who visited the shrine of genius thirty years later how well the arrival of the Brontë family was remembered—the vicar with his delicate wife, and the row of six children, the eldest seven years old, the youngest, Anne, still a baby in arms, and the seven carts which brought their furniture and goods from Thornton. Forty-one years were to elapse before the vicar himself was to be carried through the low doorway leading from the vicarage garden into the churchyard and be laid under the chancel-floor of the church, where his wife and five of his six children—only Anne was buried away from Haworth—were already sleeping. They were to be years of high endeavour, tragedy, and undying fame.

II

THE OLD PARSONAGE

HOW the house which the Rev. Patrick Brontë was to occupy for the next forty-one years became open to the public, through being purchased and presented to the Brontë Society in 1928, is told in Chapter VIII; this seems a suitable place to describe it in some detail.

When the traveller has reached the summit of the steep main street and sees the 'Black Bull' upon his left hand, he takes a sharp turn to the left along Church Lane, and keeping upon his left the vestry door at the north-west of the new church, the usual way of entrance for the visitor, he reaches after some fifty or sixty yards the gate of the rectory. The garden is neater and more trim than it was in the Brontës' day; then there was but a square patch of waste ground which ran from the front door of the house to the walls of the churchyard, and was adorned with some stunted currant bushes; in addition to the gate into the lane there was a rough doorway separating the garden from the churchyard, a doorway which was only opened when there was a funeral from the parsonage. Now there is a green lawn shaded by trees, and the grim entrance is concealed by the soil of the flower-beds. The front door of the

house opens into a stone-paved hall, and on the right is the room which Mr. Brontë used as his study, probably called in his day 'the parlour'.[1] Here the children breakfasted with him, on porridge, here he had his solitary dinner, and here he transacted any church or domestic business. The children only entered this room by invitation or for matters of importance; and we know that Mr. Nicholls, when he was curate and before he became a member of the family, used to visit his vicar there most evenings and stop till between eight and nine o'clock. On the left as one enters is the dining-room [2] where the children had their midday dinner, their tea (at which their father would join them), and their supper. It was in this room that the greater part of their published work was composed, though some have maintained that *The Professor* and even some of *Jane Eyre* were written, like their juvenile compositions, in the tiny room which was their nursery by day and their bedroom by night. Here in the 'dining-room' one can imagine the three Bells, when once they had decided to challenge fate by attempting to publish their work, writing and discussing their dreams and hopes and fears. Here Emily died. Of all the rooms in this tragic house it is this room—which is so

[1] This room is now clearly labelled 'Mr. Brontë's Study'.

[2] This is now labelled, probably incorrectly, 'The Parlour'. In the Brontës' time it seems to have been known as 'The Dining-Room'.

vividly described by Mrs. Gaskell, which Charlotte refurnished in the days of her renown when her three novels had made the little household comparatively rich, and in which she sat during the five years between Anne's death and her own marriage, writing or thinking of the past—that seems to the pilgrim to be most richly haunted with phantoms of long ago.

At the back of Mr. Brontë's study is the kitchen, where, by Miss Branwell's stern decree, the girls learned their task of helping the single servant and doing their share of the work of the household. Behind the dining-room is a small cupboard of a room which was used for storing peat, fuel, and similar things, and which was turned into a little study for Charlotte's husband on her marriage. The staircase with its wooden hand-rail is just as it was in those days, and in the corner at its foot is said to be the place where Emily had her struggle for mastery with her dog, Keeper. As one climbs the stairs one finds at the back of the house, on the right, what was once a small room used by Branwell as a studio;[1] while on the other side at the back is the servant's room. In the front of the house, on the left above Mr. Brontë's study, is his bedroom, the room in which he and his

[1] This room, probably used as a studio-bedroom by Branwell when he grew up and before he had to be looked after by his father at nights, was turned into a bathroom by Charlotte Brontë about the year 1850; it is now part of the first-floor passage-way into the new wing.

only son slept for many years, and in which they both died. On the right, over the dining-room, one enters the bedroom which Miss Branwell occupied for twenty-one years; on her death it became a guest-room, and on Charlotte's marriage it was the room of her husband and herself. In this room Charlotte died. Between these last two rooms, directly over the hall, is a small room with a door facing the staircase; this was the children's nursery where they slept for many years, and where they compiled their little books after their father had gone to bed. It is likely too that some of their later work was written here, before they openly confided their ambitions to one another and joined forces.

III

CHILDHOOD AND BEYOND

THE mother of the Brontës did not long survive to be mistress of Haworth Parsonage. She faded away slowly and died in September 1821. A pathetic memory of her long illness is the tale that she used to sit up in bed and watch the fire-grate being cleaned because the servant did it the same way as in Cornwall. Many years after Mr. Brontë handed over a bundle of her love-letters for his daughter Charlotte to read; and the latter has left on record the feelings with which she read them. She felt how strange it was to peruse the records of a mind from which her own had sprung, and most strange, and at once sad and sweet, to find that mind so fine and pure. 'I wish she had lived,' she adds, 'and that I had known her.'

Her husband made two attempts to marry again. He first attempted to renew his relations with Miss Mary Burder, who has been mentioned in Chapter I, but received a severe rebuff. Next he turned his attention to his old friend at Thornton, Miss Elizabeth Franks, but found that she had recently married. Thereupon he invited his dead wife's eldest sister, Miss Elizabeth Branwell, to come from Penzance to be head of the household, and in that capacity she remained till her death. She seems to have been a

stern but kindly person, a woman with strict ideas of discipline, with an outwardly cold manner which concealed a heart full of warm affection for her young relations, a combination which was not unusual in those days and even up to the later years of Queen Victoria. Among many actions which redound to the credit of this admirable aunt is her generosity in providing the money to enable Charlotte and Emily to go to school and 'finish their education' in Brussels.

Perhaps too much has been said about the poverty and simplicity of the life at Haworth at this time. Among many other probably erroneous statements about the head of the family, we read that he condemned his daughters to a diet of potatoes, that pastry was unknown to the household, and that food composed of rice and milk was the principal delicacy of the children's meals. There is no reason to suppose that their food or their way of living in general was any more Spartan than that which was usual in those days in the households of country clergymen, or of others whose livelihood was precarious in that it depended entirely on the life and health of the bread-winner. There was, it is true, considerable care, and every penny was looked at. The vicar was middle-aged, and was never regarded as a man of robust constitution, though he certainly was. Economy then was essential for a family which would be in serious difficulties if anything happened to its head, but only

such economy as was to be found among the professional classes in the north of England then and for fifty years after.

The time came soon when the education of the six young children became a serious problem, and in July 1824 Maria and Elizabeth were sent to school at Cowan Bridge, and Charlotte and Emily followed in September of the same year. About the same time their brother, always known as Branwell, was sent to Haworth Grammar School, but it seems that his father did not much care for his being educated with the local boys, and so removed him and himself undertook the task of teaching him. So much has been written, perhaps rather wildly, upon what may be called the Cowan Bridge controversy, that it is scarcely necessary to do more than recount the bare facts. The matter became notorious partly owing to the rash statements made by Mrs. Gaskell in her noble biography, and partly owing to the frank and full description of the school in *Jane Eyre* under the name of 'Lowood'. Mr. Nicholls's letters, published after Charlotte's death in the *Halifax Guardian*, are also available; at this date they strike a reader as a trifle peevish and vehement; but he was, of course, rebutting aspersions made upon the accuracy of the statements of his wife, who had but recently died.

The very year before the two children were sent to school, a pious and benevolent clergyman, the

Rev. William Carus-Wilson, rector of Willingdon and vicar of Tunstall, had founded, at Cowan or Cowan's Bridge, two miles from Kirkby Lonsdale, on the high coach-road from Kendal to Leeds, a boarding-school for the daughters of poor clergymen, where the pupils were taken for a very low fee. Each pupil paid £14 a year for clothing, lodging, boarding, and education; £1 at entrance towards the expense of books, and £3 at entrance for pelisses, frocks, bonnets, &c., which they wore all alike. Possible extras were French, music, and drawing, at £3 a year each. There were ninety girls, and Mr. Brontë was induced to send his daughters there both because it was cheap and because it was within reasonable distance of his home. Certainly the buildings were unattractive, the greater part of the place being a disused bobbin-mill, once turned by the stream which ran at the side of the school garden. The ground-floor of this mill was roughly turned into schoolrooms, the dormitories were above, while the dining-room and the teachers' room were in the cottage at the end. All the rooms were paved with stone, and had low ceilings and small windows.

There seems to have been a good deal of illness at the school during the winter which the Brontë girls spent there, and like many other schools even since those days—and one remembers that Mr. Squeers's Academy for Young Gentlemen flourished about this

time—it provided its pupils with food that was often inadequate and usually unappetizing. There may, too, have been an excessive rigour about the discipline of Miss Andrews, who was pilloried as Miss Scatcherd in *Jane Eyre*, and certainly the poor girls spent strenuous Sundays. Whatever the weather they walked two miles in the morning to Tunstall Church, where Mr. Carus-Wilson himself, or a deputy, gave them a long service; then they ate their dinners, which they had carried with them, in a cold disused room; and then they waited for another long service in the afternoon. However, whether Charlotte exaggerated the hardships of this establishment or not, before a year had elapsed each of the two eldest daughters of Mr. Brontë had developed a rapid consumption, and each in turn was buried in the chancel of Haworth Church. Surprisingly enough Charlotte and Emily were sent back to Cowan Bridge after their sisters' death, but a short time later they too fell ill and were withdrawn.

For five years and more there was to be no schooling for the four remaining children, and this is perhaps a suitable place to describe the manner of life they led in their secluded home, and to explain why their thoughts instinctively turned to literary composition, and why, at an age when other children would have been playing or at most reading, this queer family was satisfied with nothing but writing,

and found their real pleasure in precocious authorship. To begin with, Mr. Brontë was himself an author. Between 1811 and 1818 he published four books, two in prose and two in verse, and at other times three pamphlets and two sermons. It may be true that his two books of verse—*Cottage Poems* and *The Rural Minstrel*—have little interest or distinction, and that his poetry never succeeds in being much more than a collection of hymns; but his two prose stories both possess interest. *The Cottage in the Wood: or the Art of becoming Rich and Happy* is concerned with a theme that is found in Richardson's *Pamela* as well as his own daughter's *Jane Eyre*; and *The Maid of Killarney: or Albion and Flora* in the middle of a spate of didactic dullness shows much descriptive power. There was certainly something in heredity.

Then the nature of the reading at their disposal is at least significant. At their elbows were the Bible and Shakespeare, the *Pilgrim's Progress*, Addison, the eighteenth-century poets, Sir Walter, works on ancient and contemporary history, while they took in a few provincial journals, such as the *Leeds Intelligencer*, and were lent *Blackwood's* as it came out by a local doctor. Probably all games of a noisy kind were strictly forbidden; indeed any one who has been inside the tiny rooms at Haworth Parsonage will realize that they would have been intolerable. So, in the manner of children who always invent amuse-

ments and occupations to suit their environment, they turned to an eager rivalry of composition. About this time the little Brontë children produced a regular library of books, written in microscopic handwriting in copy-books, many of which can be seen to-day at Haworth. Charlotte, for instance, in less than a year and a half wrote five or six novels, a kind of dramatic serial called *The Islanders*, many stories of which the hero is either the Duke of Wellington or one of his sons, portraits of contemporary worthies, reviews and poems of many kinds. In 1829 (aged 13) she writes an apology for having temporarily abandoned the novel upon which she was engaged at the time, because she was finding the politics of the day so absorbing; and then she proceeds to a description of the discussion in the House of Commons upon the Catholic Emancipation Bill, a piece of writing which, the Abbé Dimnet says, recalls Macaulay's account of the opening of the trial of Warren Hastings. It is really pleasant to think that, when their father had wound up the clock on the stairs and retired to bed at nine with the unvarying words 'don't be up late, children', and when the nightcap had replaced the more impressive headgear of the day upon Miss Branwell's head, the strange quartette, whose united ages would add up to less than fifty years, got some true joy out of life as they sat with their scratching pens in their tiny nursery.

But the time was bound to come when their father decided that further schooling was essential. After all, the only career in those days open to a poor clergyman's daughter in the bleak north was either marriage or a post as a governess; so that it is almost surprising that Charlotte was not sent to school again earlier than 1831. She was more fortunate in her second experience. The school chosen was that of Miss Wooler, at Roe Head, a fine house situated not far from Hartshead where Mr. Brontë had been curate-in-charge sixteen years before. Margaret Wooler, at this time aged forty, was a capable, kindly woman, who had about seven pupils. She soon gained the confidence and affection of the shy but remarkable new girl. Indeed she was a warm, wise friend throughout Charlotte's life, and at her wedding in 1854 took Mr. Brontë's place and 'gave her away'.

Roe Head is of great importance in Charlotte's career, though she was there as a schoolgirl for less than eighteen months, for two reasons. Here she met her two lifelong friends, Ellen Nussey and Mary Taylor. They were both remarkable persons. The latter developed into an independent, able woman, one who long before it became fashionable advocated the autonomy of her sex and a woman's right to a career of her own. 'You are like potatoes growing in a cellar,' she once said to the Brontë sisters. But it is to the former that we owe far the greater part of

our knowledge of Charlotte's home life and inner thoughts. The two were devoted friends, and wrote one another an immense number of letters. It is only in her letters to Ellen that Charlotte becomes really affectionate or whimsical. 'My dear, dear Nell,' one begins; 'dear Mrs. Menelaus' another. Fortunately Miss Nussey kept all or nearly all the letters she received in spite of the fact that soon after Charlotte's marriage Mr. Nicholls asked his wife to tell her friend to destroy them. And then secondly almost all the framework of *Shirley*, its scenery and the industrial vicissitudes, are derived from her memories of Roe Head. The people she met upon her walks and those of whom she heard Miss Wooler speak were the sons of those who attacked the machinery of Robert Moore in her third novel.

There is something of a blank between the summer of 1832 when Charlotte left Roe Head to the time three years later when she returned there as a governess. She seems to have acted as teacher as well as mother to her two younger sisters, and for a time to have shared lessons in painting with them and her brother from William Robinson, an artist who came over from Leeds. In September 1832 she drove over to Birstall to stop with the Nusseys at 'The Rydings', and the following summer Ellen Nussey paid her return visit to Haworth. It was after this visit that Charlotte wrote, 'Were I to tell you of the impression

you have made on every one here you would accuse me of flattery. Papa and Aunt are continually adducing you as an example for me to shape my action and behaviour by'. In July 1835 she returned to Roe Head as a governess, accompanied by Emily as a pupil; but the latter was so unhappy under the routine of a boarding-school, so homesick for her beloved moors, that she went back home after three months, and gentle Anne, who seems to have been happy everywhere, took her place. It is of interest to note that Emily wrote many poems during those three months and that they are all redolent of Haworth or its surroundings:

> What language can utter the feeling
> Which rose, when in exile afar,
> On the brow of a lonely hill kneeling,
> I saw the brown heath growing there?
>
> Well—well, the sad minutes are moving,
> Though loaded with trouble and pain;
> And sometime the loved and the loving
> Shall meet on the mountains again.

In the summer of 1836 Miss Wooler's school was removed to Dewsbury Moor, near Gomersal, the home of Mary Taylor, whose father, a typical Yorkshireman, was the original of Mr. Yorke of Briarmains, in *Shirley*. Soon after Charlotte had a bitter quarrel with Miss Wooler. The climate of Dewsbury

Moor did not suit Anne; and when the placid mistress made light of her cough and chest-pains, Charlotte, with the image of her two dead sisters vivid in her memory, uttered bitter reproaches. Charlotte and Anne departed; but the quarrel was soon patched up, and Charlotte spent periods of teaching in Miss Wooler's school twice in the next two years.

The time from 1837 to 1842 was not a happy one for two, if not all, of the sisters. Charlotte was scourged by deadly fits of depression; and all three took posts as governesses away from home and were far from happy. Emily had a situation at a large school with forty girls at Southowram, kept by Miss Patchett of Law Hill. Southowram is a bleak but tolerably attractive village high up on the lofty stone-quarried ridge which lies between Halifax and Brighouse. She remained there for six months, with 'hard labour from six in the morning till near eleven at night, with only one half-hour of exercise between'; and it is generally admitted that much of the scenery of *Wuthering Heights* is derived from her brief, unhappy sojourn near Halifax. Anne became governess with Mrs. Ingham of Blake Hall, near Mirfield, where there was an 'unruly, violent family of modern children'. Charlotte herself was governess with the Sidgwick family first at Stonegappe, Kildwick, near Keighley, and then at Swarcliffe, near Harrogate, and later with Mrs. White, 'Upperwood House', Rawdon,

near Leeds. Neither situation proved congenial. The former venture has obtained some little notoriety because Mr. A. C. Benson, the author, late Master of Magdalene College, Cambridge, has defended his cousins, the Sidgwicks, against the strictures of Mrs. Gaskell in her biography. At any rate Charlotte herself, in a letter to Emily dated the 8th of June 1839, writes 'More riotous, perverse, unmanageable cubs never grew'. In the other situation Charlotte found her employers on the whole kind, worthy people, but the children were 'indulged', and she was glad when she had 'seen her noisy little charges deposited snugly in their cribs'. It is significant that when Charlotte was discussing with the Whites the possibility of her starting, together with her sisters, a boarding-school for girls, either at Haworth or possibly at Bridlington, they warned her that their present qualifications for such a venture could hardly be adequate in the eyes of parents, and suggested that the three girls should go for several months to the Continent, so that a mastery of the French language might help them to attract pupils.

In the year 1839 Charlotte received her first two proposals of marriage. The first was from the Rev. Henry Nussey, Ellen's brother, a curate at Donnington, and, to quote her own words, she returned a 'decided negative'. She was able to congratulate the young clergyman upon his engagement to another

only a few months later; indeed we learn from his diary that he only proposed to Charlotte, 'C. B. a Yorkshire friend', after receiving an unfavourable answer from another young lady. The second proposal was from a Mr. Bryce, a young Irish clergyman, fresh from Dublin University, who was curate to the vicar of Colne, across the moors from Haworth. Though the offer was expressed in 'ardent language', it was equally unsuccessful, and was discussed in rather a heartless way in a letter to Ellen Nussey. But Charlotte was in the habit of speaking of these and all such things with the utmost frankness in her letters to her beloved Nell.

Before proceeding to describe the Brussels episode, something should be said about the life of Branwell Brontë during this period, in view of the influence which his character and development had upon the life-plans of the sisters. We have seen that he shared in his sisters' precocious literary exploits between 1825 and 1831, and there are in existence examples of his juvenilia dating as late as 1837, when he was twenty. But even so, and in spite of receiving some kind of education from his father, time must often have hung heavily on his hands at Haworth, and the young man fell into the habit of visiting too constantly the 'Black Bull' which lies little more than a stone's throw from the vicarage. It seems that he was a bright, pert youth, brimming over with merriment

and good spirits, and that he became very popular with the local visitors to the inn through his powers of mimicry and his skill in entertainment; and it is said that whenever a stranger was spending a lonely evening there, it became the landlord's custom to send up to the vicarage to invite the young man down to amuse him and share his bottle of wine. One cannot but blame Mr. Brontë for not sending his son right away from his village surroundings and associations. *Nemo repente fuit turpissimus*—and had young Branwell been put into some definite occupation at the age of sixteen or seventeen, a not uncommon but very poignant tragedy might have been averted.

It is true that several attempts were made to provide him with suitable employment. Thus in 1835 he went to London with the idea of becoming a pupil at the Royal Academy Art Schools, but he soon returned, possibly because he wasted his money and got into trouble, but more likely because his father found the extra expense too great a burden to his slender purse. In 1836 we find him practising as a painter of portraits in Bradford, and he seems to have spent much of his spare time there, and he doubtless had a good deal, in dissipation. At any rate he had long periods of idleness which were punctuated with drunkenness, and by January 1840 drink and evil associations had already considerably corrupted a character which was naturally unstable. In that

BRANWELL BRONTË'S PORTRAIT OF HIS SISTERS
(painted about 1835; now in the National Portrait Gallery)
Anne is on the left, Emily in the centre, Charlotte on the right

month he became tutor at the house of Mr. Postlethwaite at Broughton-in-Furness; and the notorious and too often printed letter which he wrote at this period in his career to the Secretary of the Lodge of the Three Graces at Haworth, beginning 'Old Knave of Trumps', could only have been produced by a young man of vicious temperament.

He did not keep this situation many months, for in October 1840 we find him in the position of clerk in charge of the railway station at Sowerby Bridge, near Halifax, on the Leeds and Manchester, later called the Lancashire and Yorkshire, railway, and in the next year he held a similar post at the lonely station of Luddenden Foot; but the railway company had got tired of his unreliable ways by the early months of 1842, for he seems to have been careless up to the point of dishonesty as well as drunken, and he was back in Haworth before his sisters returned from Brussels. There will be something more to say of Branwell when tragedy begins to brood over Haworth Vicarage; here there is little more to mention except a brief word or two about two of the many works in which he plays a considerable part.

The first is by Francis H. Grundy and is called *Pictures of the Past*, published in 1879. The author was a civil engineer, who met Branwell at Luddenden Foot and made friends with him. The book is an autobiography, garrulous, ill-written, and patently

unreliable in both facts and dates; and the portion of it which concerns Branwell is of little importance except that it describes very graphically a visit paid by the author to the 'Black Bull' a few days before Branwell's death when the two dined together and there were pathetic scenes. Moreover, in another passage Mr. Grundy claims to have called at the vicarage and seen the three sisters whom he describes as 'distant and distrait, large of nose, small of figure, red of hair, prominent of spectacles, showing great intellectual development, but with eyes constantly cast down, very silent, painfully retiring'.

The second is a more ingenuous, attractive, and rather pathetically ambitious work. It is called *The Brontë Family with Special Reference to Patrick Branwell Brontë*, by Francis A. Leyland, published in two volumes in 1886. It is really a life of Branwell and a spirited defence of his abilities. It contains a great number of works, literary, poetic, and imaginative, which he wrote during the last ten years of his life, and attempts to maintain that his achievements as an author were such that he might easily have written all, or at least a part, of *Wuthering Heights*. We know, of course, for a fact that he did nothing of the sort;[1] but even if we did not, the productions which Mr. Leyland prints in wearisome profusion are almost without exception so mediocre that we are quite

[1] See Chapter X.

convinced of his incapability. There was a good deal of poetry written in the villages and towns of the West Riding of Yorkshire in those days, and probably there is still; the local poet who published his verses in the *Halifax Guardian* or other local newspaper was no rare phenomenon; and Branwell's effusions were no better, if no worse, than the majority of these. He was no genius, and all his sisters' fame will never make him one.

IV

BRUSSELS

THE visit to Brussels was made owing to the sisters' determination that the profession of governess was uncongenial to them all and their realization that the only alternative was to take resident pupils in their own home or to start a small school. To do this it was clearly necessary for them to acquire some additional qualification; and so in February 1842 Charlotte and Emily set out for the Continent, via Ostend, stopping a couple of days in London on the way. They were escorted by their father, and put up at the Chapter Coffee House in Paternoster Row. They climbed the dome of St. Paul's and visited some picture galleries.

The boarding school to which these unsophisticated Yorkshire girls were bound was called the Héger Pensionnat. It was in the Rue d'Isabelle and was kept by M. Constantin Héger, professor of rhetoric at the Athenaeum, and his wife. The former was aged thirty-three, with black hair and a heavy black moustache. 'A little black being, with a face that varies in expression', wrote Charlotte to her friend Ellen. 'Sometimes he borrows the lineaments of an insane tomcat, sometimes those of a delirious hyena; occasionally, but very seldom, he discards

these perilous attractions, and assumes an air not above one hundred degrees removed from mild and gentleman-like.' Mme Héger was capable and kind, at any rate at first, to the two foreigners. Here they lived at reduced fees—the total charge was less than 650 francs per annum for each ordinary boarder—occupying, by virtue of their greater age, the two end beds, which were secluded from the rest by curtains, in a dormitory which held thirty girls.

The two strangers studied with avidity, and we can still see a couple of Charlotte's French essays which she composed after she had been there a few months and which show remarkably rapid progress. M. Héger thought Emily the more capable or at least the more original, but he perceived and maintained that both had ability of a very high order. It is probable that the girls, though lonely, were not unhappy; very likely they were too busy to be miserable. 'My present life', Charlotte writes, 'is so delightful, so congenial to my own nature, compared with that of a governess.' There were a few English girls at the school, and in one of them, a Miss Laetitia Wheelwright, the daughter of a doctor from Kensington, a dayboarder, Charlotte became interested, and kept up a correspondence with her to the end of her life. Also both the Taylor girls, Mary and Martha, were studying at another, more expensive, establishment in the city. The thing that made them

most uneasy was the Catholic ritual which met them at every turn. In her letters Charlotte shows an excessive scorn for everything connected with Popery; and this trait, upon which many have commented unfavourably, is surely not unnatural. Aggressive Protestantism was common then and for many years later in the West Riding of Yorkshire; the girls were the daughters of an Irish Protestant, and the Oxford Movement had as yet made little headway in the distant parts of England. But apart from small matters such as this, it must be admitted that the first part of the Brussels visit was a great success; and when the period of six months, decided upon by their original plan, ended in September 1842, Mme Héger invited them to stay for another six months, with Charlotte as resident English teacher, and Emily to give music-lessons. In return for these services they were to have free board and lodging and to continue their studies in French and German.

This second half-year was suddenly interrupted by Miss Branwell's death on 29 October. The news reached the girls on 3 November, and they returned at once, but were, of course, too late for the funeral. By her will Miss Branwell left mementoes to all four children, including Branwell, and her little estate of £1,500 was equally divided between the three Brontë girls and the child of a Cornish brother. Charlotte brought back with her from M. Héger a letter for

her father in which he regrets that his 'two dear pupils' were to leave his establishment. 'Miss Charlotte', he writes, 'was beginning to give lessons in French and to acquire that assurance, that self-possession so necessary to a teacher. Another year at most, and the work would have been finished.'

What was to be done? Anne was in an excellent situation with the Robinsons at Thorp Green, where she was happy and well liked by both parents and pupils. Mr. Brontë could not be left alone. It was decided that Emily should remain, no doubt much to her joy, to look after the home, while Charlotte should return to the Pensionnat Héger for one more year. So, in January 1842, she left Haworth again.

So we reach what is the most difficult and most widely discussed period of Charlotte Brontë's life, the period which she has closely described in the greater part of *Villette*—the finest piece of flaming autobiography in the English language—and which is yet full of uncertainties and obscurities. It may be said that it is cruel or at least unnecessary to inquire into the question which now follows, and perhaps that is true. But the lives of the great, if they are great enough, are public property—that perhaps is one of the penalties of greatness—the documents concerned have been published, and it is impossible to get a full, real view of Charlotte's personality unless they are discussed.

She began her second journey to Brussels with no little reluctance. 'I returned to Brussels after aunt's death against my conscience, prompted by what seemed then an irresistible impulse. I was punished for my selfish folly by a total withdrawal, for more than two years, of happiness and peace of mind.' Presently she began to be melancholy, and complains, 'Of late days M. and Mme Héger rarely speak to me, and I really don't pretend to care a fig for anybody else in the establishment. . . . I should not wonder if he disapproves very much of my unamiable want of sociability.' Then she alludes about the same time to the speciousness, the furtive methods of Mme Héger, and there are several signs that the relations between both the Hégers and herself were far less friendly. For many years after Charlotte's death it was assumed that Mme Héger was becoming jealous of the interest which her husband showed in his gifted pupil—indeed when Mrs. Gaskell came to Brussels for information for her life of Charlotte, Mme Héger refused to see her, and consistently and openly maintained that Charlotte had been in love with her husband—but that though Charlotte regarded her master with admiration and affection, there was no feeling stronger than the veneration of a pupil for a kindly and appreciative teacher.

But on 29 July 1913 there were published in *The Times* four letters which were written by Charlotte

to M. Héger during the years 1844 and 1845. Mrs. Gaskell had seen them, made a brief quotation from them, but only partially used them. They had been presented to the British Museum by Dr. Paul Héger, son of the Hégers, President of the Royal Academy of Medicine in Brussels. No one can read these letters, especially if he also remembers Lucy Snowe in *Villette* and Mlle Henri in *The Professor*, without being convinced that Charlotte was passionately in love with M. Héger.

> 'Jour et nuit', she writes, 'je ne trouve ni repos ni paix — si je dors je fais des rêves tourmentants où je vous vois toujours sévère, toujours sombre et irrité contre moi — pardonnez-moi donc, Monsieur, si je prends la partie de vous écrire encore — comment puis-je supporter la vie si je ne fais pas un effort pour en alléger les souffrances?'

or again,

> 'Me defendre à vous écrire, refuser de me répondre, ce sera de m'arracher la seule joie que j'ai au monde, me priver de mon dernier privilège — privilège auquel je ne consentirai jamais à renoncer volontairement. Croyez-moi, mon maître, en m'écrivant vous faites un bon œuvre — tant que je vous crois assez content de moi, tant que j'ai l'espoir de recevoir vos nouvelles, je puis être tranquille et pas trop triste, mais quand un silence

morne et prolongé semble m'avertir de l'éloignement de mon maître à mon égard — quand de jour en jour j'attends une lettre, et que de jour en jour le désappointement vient me rejeter dans un douleureux accablement, et que cette douce joie de voir votre écriture, de lire vos conseils me fuit comme une vaine vision, alors, j'ai la fièvre — je perds l'appétit et le sommeil — je dépéris.'

And once more, this time in a postscript and in English,

'I have never heard French spoken but once since I left Brussels—and then it sounded like music in my ears—every word was most precious to me because it reminded me of you—I love French for your sake with all my heart and soul.'

Passionate letters! M. Héger answered once or twice —indeed he was anxious that Mrs. Gaskell should see his replies which he felt sure Charlotte must have kept. But they had not been kept; Charlotte, or more probably Mr. Nicholls after she was gone, had destroyed them; while these four, written in heart's blood, were kept, and possibly were read and carefully stored away by Mme Héger, and on the edge of one of them M. Héger noted down the name and address of a shoemaker.

One need lay little stress on the quotation given above that Charlotte returned to Brussels against the

dictates of her conscience. That phrase was not written till 1846, and may merely mean that in her absence her father had been neglected, or her brother been allowed to sink more deeply into the mire of dissipation, and that had she been at home she might have prevented it. But who can doubt that in her last year at Brussels she found her only joy in admiration and affection for her teacher, and that when she returned home, if not before, she realized that her admiration had deepened into passion? She knew she would never see him again, and she permitted herself the hope that she might regain her peace of mind if she could write to him or hear from him occasionally.

Two more points. Why did the correspondence cease? Mme Héger maintained that Charlotte had written in such a manner that it was necessary to tell her to change it, and that then she wrote no more. Miss Laetitia Wheelwright said that M. Héger asked Charlotte to address her letters to the Athenaeum instead of to the Rue d'Isabelle, and that this suggestion of a clandestine correspondence put an end to Charlotte's share in it. It may have been that Mme Héger read the last of the four letters and forbade her husband to reply; and that Charlotte, receiving no answer to that letter which had ended, except for the postscript in English,—

'Puis-je vous écrire encore au mois de Mai pro-

chain? J'aurai voulu attendre une année, mais c'est impossible, c'est trop long.'—

felt the rebuff, and was silent.

Again, did Charlotte never think how cruel to Mme Héger, if not to others, her portrait of Madame Beck and her circle must seem? Or what pain the whole story of *Villette* must cause? We are told that she took precautions to prevent *Villette* from reaching Brussels. She informed Miss Wheelwright that she had received a promise that there should be no translation and that the book should never appear in the French language. As a matter of fact just after Charlotte's death the novel was published in French. She little knew, even at the end, what it meant to be famous.

Note on Chapter Four

Here is a translation of the three extracts from Charlotte's letters to M. Héger:

'Day and night I find neither rest nor peace—if I sleep I have torturing dreams in which I see you always severe, always grave and angry with me—forgive me then, Sir, if I adopt the course of writing to you again. How can I endure to live if I make no effort to ease the sufferings of life?'

'To forbid me to write to you, to refuse to answer me, will be to tear from me the only joy I have in the world, to deprive me of my last privilege, a privilege I will never consent to surrender willingly. Believe me, my master, by writing to me you do a work of kindness—so long as I think you are pleased with me, so long as I have hopes of hearing from you, I can be at peace and not too sad. But when a long and gloomy silence seems to threaten me with the estrangement of my master—when day after day I wait for a letter, and when day after day disappointment comes to hurl me back into overwhelming grief, and the sweet joy of seeing your handwriting, of reading your advice, flies from me like an empty vision, then I am stricken with fever, I lose appetite and sleep, I pine away.'

'May I write to you again next May? I should have liked to wait a full year, but it is impossible, it is too long.'

V

LITERARY ADVENTURE

I

CHARLOTTE arrived at Haworth from Brussels on 2 January 1844, bringing with her a diploma signed by M. Héger and bearing the seal of the Athenaeum, which stated that she had studied the French language thoroughly and was capable of teaching it. Anne and Branwell were both at home for the holidays; the latter about a year before had been appointed tutor in the house of the Robinsons of Thorp Green, where his sister had been for some time the governess. The two went back in a few days, and Charlotte and Emily were left together to look after their father, to resume their lonely walks upon the moors, and to discuss the prospects of starting the much debated school.

But the more they discussed it, the more numerous and difficult the obstacles seemed to be. It is true that they went so far as to print the pathetic prospectus which is still to be seen at Haworth parsonage to-day, but they got very little further. Mr. Brontë was nearly seventy and his eyesight was failing; the house was much too small, though perhaps they could

build a wing or addition with their aunt's legacy; the gravestones were too near the house, the whole place was unattractive. Then Branwell was beginning to be more than an anxiety, a burden. He behaved queerly, was sometimes strangely depressed, sometimes foolishly elated. After Christmas of 1844, when the pair had returned to Thorp Green, his behaviour was stranger still, and Anne's letters obviously concealed a good deal of anxiety and suspicion. There was something wrong with Branwell; he was earning his employer's disapproval, and might any time come home in disgrace.

The blow fell in July 1845 on Charlotte's return from a particularly enjoyable visit, made with Ellen Nussey to the house of the latter's married brother, the Rev. Henry Nussey, at Hathersage in Derbyshire. Branwell had just returned, summarily dismissed from Thorp Green. It is scarcely necessary to do more than sketch the details of this sordid story, which really only calls for mention owing to the credulity of his sisters, and later of Charlotte's biographer, Mrs. Gaskell. It seems that the unhappy young man, possibly in miserable emulation of Coleridge and de Quincey, began to take opium at Thorp Green as a substitute for what he had called, in a letter already referred to, 'demon whisky'. Under the influence of the drug, he imagined himself to be in love with his employer's wife, who was seventeen

years older than himself, and, what mattered more, that she returned his affection. His dismissal was probably merely due to the fact that his drinking and drug-taking had been discovered; but he managed to convince his sisters that he was the victim of a wicked and designing woman. Whatever may be the truth of the matter, one thing at least is sure, that for three years Branwell was to be the curse of the vicarage. He lived and lounged there in idleness, spending all the money he could get on drugs or drink, and making the lives of his father and sisters a hell upon earth. On one occasion in a drunken slumber he set his bed on fire, and was rescued by brave Emily, who put out the flames and carried her brother to her own bed. In her letters Charlotte constantly alludes to him as to one who was already ruined body and soul and condemned to a lingering death. He had his periods of decency and lucidity, it is clear; Leyland's book shows that he could still compose with nauseating fluency; and attempts were still made to provide him with settled employment. But such became fewer as the months went on. There could be little prospect of a school with such an incubus upon the hearth. What was left to them now but to hide their faces from the world in their lonely home, and turn, as they had done when they were tiny children, to the consolations of literature?

2

It was in the autumn of 1845 that an event happened which was to change in a score of months the destiny of the three Brontë sisters, and add a significant page to the rich volume of English literature. Charlotte tells us, in the biographical introduction which she published for a later edition of *Wuthering Heights*, that one day she discovered the note-book in which Emily had written her poems. She read them, and was astonished by the power and depth, the passion, and the daring of her verses. Emily was intensely distressed by what she regarded as a breach of confidence. 'It took hours to reconcile her to the discovery I had made.' Anne thereupon quietly remarked that if Charlotte liked Emily's poems, she might care to look at hers too, some of which had actually been accepted and published by the editors of certain magazines; and so after much discussion they decided to try to find a publisher who would be willing to print a selection of the poems of all three in a single volume. Charlotte herself thought that the excellence of Emily's work might carry that of her two sisters along with it. Their identity was to be strictly concealed—probably Emily insisted on that—and the names of the joint-authors were to be Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell.

It did not take them long to find out that no

publisher would produce the work at his own risk; and so finally Charlotte applied to Messrs. Aylott & Jones, of London, who agreed to publish it for £31. The proofs were sent to Currer Bell, c/o Miss Brontë, The Vicarage, Haworth, Yorks., and the book appeared in May 1846, entitled *Poems by Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell*, in length 165 pages. About ten copies of the book were sent to various periodicals for review—the most important journal which noticed it was the *Athenaeum* in its number of 4 July—and the total number of copies actually sold was two. Such was the fate of the pathetic volume, of which Charlotte wrote when her collaborators were both dead, 'The book was printed, it is scarcely known, and all of it that merits to be known are the poems of Ellis Bell'. Whatever else can be said about the book, it contains what is generally admitted to be one of the greatest poems in our language, melancholy, sonorous, passionate, masterly in rhythm and diction, a splendid love-poem which sets Emily Brontë among the immortals.

Cold in the earth—and the deep snow piled above thee,
Far, far removed, cold in the dreary grave,
Have I forgot, my only Love, to love thee,
Severed at last by Time's all-severing wave?

Now, when alone, do my thoughts no longer hover
Over the mountains on that northern shore,

Resting their wings where heath and fern-leaves
cover
Thy noble heart for ever, evermore.

Cold in the earth—and fifteen wild Decembers
From those brown hills have melted into spring:
Faithful, indeed, is the spirit that remembers
After such years of change and suffering.

Sweet Love of youth, forgive, if I forget thee,
While the world's tide is bearing me along,
Other desires and other hopes beset me,
Hopes which obscure but cannot do thee wrong.

No later light has lightened up my heaven,
No second morn has ever shone for me;
All my life's bliss from thy dear life was given,
All my life's bliss is in the grave with thee.

But when the days of golden dreams had perished,
And even Despair was powerless to destroy,
Then did I learn how existence could be cherished,
Strengthened and fed, without the aid of joy.

Then did I check the tears of useless passion,
Weaned my young soul from yearning after thine,
Sternly denied its burning wish to hasten
Down to that tomb already more than mine.

And even yet I dare not let it languish,
Dare not indulge in memory's rapturous pain,
Once drinking deep of that divinest anguish,
How could I seek the empty world again?

3

'Ill-success', to use Charlotte's own words, 'failed to crush' them, and doubtless after much anxious deliberation, they decided to tempt fortune further by each writing a novel. In a few months Currer Bell finished *The Professor*, Ellis's work was the astonishing book, *Wuthering Heights*, while Acton produced a shorter tale called *Agnes Grey*. The first of these three was uniformly unsuccessful, and was not published at all till 1857, after Charlotte's death, though its author courageously dispatched it to six different publishers; but *Wuthering Heights* and *Agnes Grey* were soon accepted, 'on terms somewhat impoverishing to the two authors', to make up a single novel in three volumes, for that was the form in which fiction was published in the forties. Nothing daunted, Charlotte started her second venture, on an August day 1846, when she was sitting in a room in a Manchester nursing-home, waiting to see whether an operation which had just been performed upon her father for cataract was successful. She continued to dispatch *The Professor* and to write *Jane Eyre*; and in July 1847, Messrs. Smith & Elder, of Cornhill,

to whom she had mentioned the fact that she was just on the point of completing a three-volume novel, wrote a letter accompanying the rejected manuscript of *The Professor*, in which they discussed that work and said that they would gladly examine the novel upon which Currer Bell was then engaged. Three weeks later the manuscript of *Jane Eyre* was dispatched to Cornhill. It was immediately accepted. Mr. Williams, the publishers' reader, was overpowered; it was then read by a younger member of the staff, Mr. Taylor, who carried it home and sat up all night reading it. Six weeks later, in October 1847, *Jane Eyre* was published. The first edition of the work was exhausted in six weeks. The second, which appeared a few weeks later, was eagerly bought. It was the novel of the season and the world wondered who Currer Bell might be.

In the same month as the second edition of *Jane Eyre* appeared, Mr. Thomas Cautley Newby, of 72 Mortimer Street, Cavendish Square, London, published *Wuthering Heights* and *Agnes Grey* by Ellis and Acton Bell in three volumes, the first two of which contained the former work. The book passed all but unnoticed. The literary world, if it thought about them at all, regarded the publication of the two stories as a not over scrupulous attempt to plant upon the public an 'earlier and ruder effort' of the author of *Jane Eyre*. It was not till September 1850 that any

important review of the work was written, that in the *Palladium*, and it was not till the seventies that the remarkable genius shown in *Wuthering Heights* was recognized except by Charlotte Brontë herself; though we do learn from a famous letter written by Charlotte to Mr. Williams in November 1848 that the *North American Review* conjectured that Ellis Bell was a 'man of uncommon talents, but dogged, brutal and morose'. It was the same reviewer who said that *Jane Eyre* bore the marks of more than one mind and sex.

4

Jane Eyre, for which, it may be interesting to note, its author received £500, a sum which was also paid for both *Shirley* and *Villette*, is an astonishing book. Though it has been published eighty years, and is some respects old-fashioned, it is very difficult, even to-day, to lay it aside, on one's first reading, without finishing it. Thackeray, for instance, wrote, 'How well I remember the delight and wonder and pleasure with which I read *Jane Eyre*, sent to me by an author whose name and sex were alike unknown to me; the strange fascination of the book; and how with my own work pressing upon me, I could not, having taken the volumes up, lay them down until they were read through'. It is based partly on its author's own experience as a schoolgirl and a governess, partly on her brother Branwell's unconscious disclosures about

men and their ways, and partly on her own fiery imagination and the intuition of genius. It owes little to the years in Brussels, doubtless because that period was devoted, so to speak, to *The Professor*, which was still unpublished. It is full of defects, solecisms, and ignorance of the world. Yet it carries the reader away, to some extent through the sheer power of its narrative and the vigour of its style—Charlotte was always a master of easy, apposite English, which is just a little old-fashioned, recalling Dr. Johnson and Gibbon and the eighteenth-century periods—and also because of its unexpectedness. Certainly the early Victorian Age found the novelty of an ugly heroine overwhelming. Here is the story in outline:

Jane Eyre is a poor orphan girl, living in the house of a rich aunt, ill-treated by her cousins, and generally scorned because of her poverty. Then she goes to Lowood, a boarding-school for orphans, where the authoress describes at length the treatment which she believed her two sisters had received at the Cowan Bridge School. On reaching womanhood Jane becomes a governess in a lonely country-house to an old lady's French ward, and in her solitary walks meets Mr. Rochester, who treats her now with disdain, now with tenderness. Presently Jane's jealousy is roused by the rumour that Rochester is going to marry the beautiful Miss Ingram, who is haughty and apart from her looks unattractive. A number of

people, including Rochester and Miss Ingram, then visit the country-house and queer things begin to happen. Rochester tells fortunes, masquerading as an old crone; an odd chambermaid tries to kill one of the guests, and sets fire to Rochester's bed-curtains, and Jane sees a ghostly woman in her room at dead of night.

Next Jane is called away to her aunt's death-bed, and on her return consents to become the wife of Rochester, who finds that he cannot live without her. In the very middle of the marriage ceremony a voice is heard to forbid the wedding because the bridegroom is already married. Rochester admits that the ghostly woman is his mad wife, and proposes to elope with Jane out of England. She flies in horror, and after desperate adventures finds sanctuary at the house of two sisters whose brother is a clergyman. Jane becomes teacher in the parish school, and in due course he proposes marriage. She is just about to agree when a mysterious voice calls her. She flies back to the neighbourhood of her former adventures to find the house burnt to the ground and Rochester blinded. The lovers are then united.

Though the public bought and read and admired the work of Currer Bell, the reviews were generally unfavourable. The most provocative one was that which appeared in the *Quarterly*, written by Miss Rigby, afterwards Lady Eastlake. It is worth quoting

for three reasons: first it is important to understand why it caused so much pain to Charlotte, secondly it gave rise to a completely apocryphal story that Hugh Brontë, Charlotte's uncle, came over from County Down armed with his shillelagh to discover and trounce the author—this is to be found in Dr. Wright's book, *The Brontës in Ireland*—and thirdly because Charlotte's revenge for it roused the humorous admiration of Mr. Augustine Birrell. She put exact quotations from it in the mouth of an odious character in one of her later novels. Mr. Birrell recommends the practice to other irritated authors.

The important part of the review runs as follows: 'We have said that this book portrays a heart entirely lacking in grace. That is, in our opinion, the great, the horrible, defect of *Jane Eyre*. The heroine is, throughout, the personification of an undisciplined and unregenerate mind. It is true that she behaves well and displays great moral strength, but it is the strength of a soul which is utterly pagan and a law unto itself. We do not find in it a single trace of Christian grace. It has inherited the direst sin of our fallen nature, the sin of pride. Jane Eyre is proud and consequently ungrateful. It has pleased God to make her an orphan, without friends, without money, nevertheless, she thanks nobody—least of all the friends,

companions and teachers of her lonely youth—for the food and clothing, the care and education they have had the goodness to give her until she could provide for herself. In short, the autobiography of Jane Eyre is an anti-Christian work. It is a long murmur against the well-being of the rich and the privations of the poor, that is to say, a murmur against the divine will. It is a proud affirmation of the rights of one which nothing in God's Word or the dispensations of His providence authorize. It is that tone of discontent which forms the most subtle evil to be combated by the courts, the Christian pulpits, and civilized society.'

It would hardly be fair to close this portion of the Brontë story without repeating, often as it has been quoted already, Charlotte's disclosure of her success to her father.

'Papa,' she said, 'I've been writing a book.'
'Have you, my dear?'
'Yes, and I want you to read it.'
'I am afraid it will try my eyes too much.'
'But it is not in manuscript, it is printed.'
'My dear, you've never thought of the expense it will be! It will be almost sure to be a loss, for how can you get a book sold? No one knows you or your name.'
'But, papa, I don't think it will be a loss; no more

will you if you'll just let me read you a review or two and tell you more about it.'

Later in the day Mr. Brontë, much gratified, said to Emily and Anne, 'Girls, do you know Charlotte's written a book, and it is much better than likely?'

5

It is no difficult task to write an analysis of *Jane Eyre* in two or three hundred words; but to attempt the same with *Wuthering Heights* is a different matter. The book begins at, or very near the end, a fact which somewhat complicates the story. A Mr. Lockwood, the tenant of Thrushcross Grange, walks over to see his landlord, one Heathcliff, at Wuthering Heights. At this and a subsequent visit he examines the farm-house and tries to gain acquaintance with its inmates, and being intensely interested in certain things which he observes, he induces his housekeeper, Mrs. Dean, to tell him by instalments the whole story:

Long ago, when Wuthering Heights was a peaceful farm, Mr. Earnshaw, its owner, had adopted a little gipsy-boy, Heathcliff, as a companion to his son Hindley and his daughter Catherine. Hindley ill-treats the waif, but Cathy becomes his inseparable friend. A few miles away there is a small country house, called Thrushcross Grange, occupied by the Linton family. When she is about fifteen Catherine goes over to stop with the Lintons, and when she

returns she has apparently forgotten her boy-friend, Heathcliff, and later becomes engaged to Edgar Linton, the heir of the house. The marriage takes place and Heathcliff disappears.

While he is away Mr. Earnshaw dies, and his son Hindley starts to drink himself to death. Heathcliff returns, strangely altered, and in no long time gains complete mastery over every one at Wuthering Heights, hastening Hindley Earnshaw's degradation and treating his only son Hareton like a savage. Next he elopes with Edgar Linton's sister Isabella, and they have a son, Linton Heathcliff, but he hates both his wife and his son. Meantime, Catherine Linton dies in childbirth and leaves a daughter also called Catherine. When Isabella Heathcliff dies in due course, the sickly Linton Heathcliff is taken over to Thrushcross Grange, and Heathcliff contrives to make him fall precociously in love with Catherine the second, and marry her. The young husband soon dies, and Heathcliff is now master of both Thrushcross Grange and Wuthering Heights, with only his young daughter-in-law and the half savage Hareton Earnshaw to ill-treat. The life of these three is described at some length, but in course of time Heathcliff himself dies, and is buried, according to his instructions, at dead of night next to Catherine Linton whom he had loved and hated.

There is just a hint of happiness towards the end

of the book: young Hareton Earnshaw is clearly to fall in love with the second Catherine and marry her; but that matter is left vague, and the book ends with the visit which Mr. Lockwood pays to the churchyard and the adjacent graves where Heathcliff and his Cathy lie buried. 'I lingered round them, under that benign sky: watched the moths fluttering among heath and harebells, listened to the soft wind breathing through the grass, and wondered how any one could ever imagine unquiet slumbers for the sleepers in that quiet earth.'

Such is the baldest possible outline of this remarkable and complicated story. A very great deal has been written to emphasize its astonishing features—how Titanic the characters, how brutal the surroundings, how ferocious its scenes and how sexless its passion, of which Swinburne said that there is nothing less pure in it than flame or sunlight. Even the legal problems involved in the story, the devolution of the two estates by intestacy and the like have been most carefully discussed and investigated. People have naturally wondered whether an unsophisticated and untravelled daughter of a country clergyman could possibly have written such a book, and they have looked round for the nearest man as a more likely author, and have only been able to suggest Branwell. The truth is that real genius is inexplicable and unaccountable; just as there are countless things

in Shakespeare's works which we should have imagined Shakespeare the man incapable of knowing or saying, so some strange mysterious force worked through the brain and pen of Emile Brontë to achieve this masterpiece. After all Charlotte, with her usual gift of saying exactly the right thing in the best possible way, has really said the last word on this point.

'My sister's disposition was not naturally gregarious; circumstances favoured and fostered her tendency to seclusion; except to go to church or take a walk on the hills, she rarely crossed the threshold of home. Though her feeling for the people round was benevolent, intercourse with them she never sought; nor, with very few exceptions, ever experienced. And yet she knew them: knew their ways, their language, their family histories; she could hear of them with interest, and talk of them with detail, minute, graphic, and accurate; but *with* them she rarely exchanged a word. Hence it seemed that what her mind had gathered of the real concerning them, was too exclusively confined to those tragic and terrible traits of which, in listening to the secret annals of every rude vicinage, the memory is sometimes compelled to receive the impress. Her imagination, which was a spirit more sombre than sunny, more powerful than sportive, found in such traits

material whence it wrought creations like Heathcliff, like Earnshaw, like Catherine. Having formed these beings she did not know what she had done.'

In all Charlotte's work there is much, possibly too much, of the autobiographical; in Emily's there is none, or if there is any, it is to be found in the rebellious, gloomy spirit of Heathcliff. The truth is that genius set to work, the mountains were in labour, and the beings that were engendered in that mighty conflict mastered their creator.

6

Agnes Grey is a gentle, even conventional story of the younger daughter of a clergyman who is in poor circumstances. She decides to become a governess, and her first situation, with the Bloomfields, is described in some detail. Doubtless the unruly and tiresome children had their prototypes in real life, and Anne Brontë reproduces some of the pupils whom she had actually attempted to control. Dismissed from this situation Agnes Grey is next engaged in a more opulent and cultured household, Horton Lodge, where she has two pupils, Miss Rosamund Murray, a heartless beauty who feeds on admiration, particularly in church and from clergymen, and her sister Miss Matilda, a hoyden whose sole interest is in horses and dogs, and who swears

like a trooper. Presently a new curate, Mr. Weston, arrives on the scene, and has ample opportunity both for observing the placid, admirable character of the governess and for falling a victim to the wiles of her unscrupulous pupil. The governess admits to her diary in due course that she has a tender feeling for the cleric, but little hope of her love being returned; and presently owing to the death of her father she leaves her situation, and settles down with her mother in a watering-place on the south coast. Apparently nothing is left to her but memories of the dear days when she and the curate visited the sick together; but one day Mr. Weston suddenly appears and is found to have been appointed the vicar of a neighbouring village with a stipend of £300 a year. He declares his affection and is accepted; the marriage takes place, and the book closes with a picture of their happy circumstances and a mention of three children.

7

When the year 1848 dawned the world was entirely unaware of the identity of Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell. Only a few months were to pass before the great secret was disclosed to Charlotte Brontë's publishers, though it was not till soon after the publication of *Shirley* in 1849 that a former resident of Haworth recognized the scenery, and possibly also the curates of that book, and it became known that

the much discussed author of *Jane Eyre* was the only surviving spinster daughter of an obscure Yorkshire parson. The first disclosure came about in the following way. A publisher in America had arranged with Messrs. Smith & Elder to see the proof-sheets of Currer Bell's next novel. In the meantime Anne Brontë completed her second novel, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, and dispatched it to Newby, her publisher. He in his turn promised the proof-sheets of Anne's book to another American publisher, informing him at the same time that it was written by the author of *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights*, and was distinctly superior to either. When this transaction came to the knowledge of Messrs. Smith & Elder they naturally asked for some explanation from Currer Bell. It seemed time for the three authors to abandon their anonymity without delay, and explain to Currer's publishers that they were three distinct individuals. Emily was of the opinion that nothing need be done, but she was overruled by the other two; and so Charlotte and Anne, leaving Emily behind to look after their father and their brother, set off that very evening, walked four miles through a heavy thunderstorm to Keighley, and took the night train for London. Arriving early the next morning they put up at the Chapter Coffee House and then walked to the office of the publishers at Cornhill to show them the letter addressed to Currer Bell. It

must indeed have been a strange scene when the two small, shy spinsters without a word produced the letter and heard the question, 'Where did you get this?' Explanations followed, and, under pledge of secrecy, the mystery of the authorship was confessed.

The passage in Mrs. Gaskell's *Life of Charlotte Brontë* describing the few days which the two sisters spent in London and the mild gaiety in which they indulged makes pleasant reading. It is especially satisfactory to think that poor Anne had just a brief taste of London life and civilization a few months before her end. This visit was the beginning of most cordial relations between Charlotte and her publishers, though Currer Bell had already written long and vivid letters to Mr. Williams. Charlotte always seems to feel that an author owes duty and service to the publishers who are bold or kind enough to produce his works very much more than the other way round, and she constantly expresses the hope that her work may not result in loss or disappointment to her benefactors. Many of her letters to Mr. Williams are most intimate and interesting. Mr. Williams was a middle-aged man (he was born in 1800) of great literary experience, who had been friendly with Keats, Hazlitt, and Leigh Hunt. Doubtless his advice was of great value to Charlotte, and certainly her numerous letters to him reveal her sound literary judgement and her independence of thought.

The Tenant of Wildfell Hall, which was published in three volumes in July 1848, was on the whole unfavourably reviewed, but it went into a second edition before the year was out, and Acton Bell wrote a preface to the latter, in which she said that if the book prevented one thoughtless girl from falling into the very natural error of the heroine, it would not have been written in vain. A much abler and more interesting work than *Agnes Grey*, it is in the real sense a 'novel with a purpose'; and its object is to show how body and soul can be sapped by excessive indulgence in alcoholic liquors. Swinburne sums it up when he calls it a 'study of utterly flaccid and invertebrate immorality'. By its method it recalls the earlier, old-fashioned novels, for it is throughout in the form of letters from the hero to a friend, except that the earlier history of the heroine is contained in a long diary; and in the earlier days of the English novel this seems to have been the inevitable framework.

The hero is, to use his own words, a 'sort of gentleman farmer', one Gilbert Markham, unmarried and clearly attractive to the young ladies of the neighbourhood; we begin to realize quite soon for example that he might have had the hand of the Vicar's daughter for the asking. The story opens with the news that Wildfell Hall, which has long been unoccupied, has been taken by a mysterious stranger,

a widow with one small boy, named Mrs. Graham. Gilbert Markham, who is young and impressionable, rapidly falls in love with the newcomer. He takes every opportunity of winning the affection of her small son, is dreadfully cold to the local belles, and is in a heaven of happiness when the widow is occasionally, as it were forgetfully, kind to him; and in the depths of despair when, as is more frequent, she assumes a look of repellent scorn. Matters soon become complicated because evil rumours arise as to the relations between Mrs. Graham and Mr. Lawrence, the young squire, who is also the owner of Wildfell Hall. These rumours cause bitter jealousy in the heart of Gilbert, who cannot know that Lawrence is his lady's brother and not her lover, and he actually fights with him and inflicts grave injuries. So the course of true love continues to run far from smoothly until one day, after a scene, Mrs. Graham hands to Gilbert a 'thick album or manuscript volume' (having first torn away the last two or three pages) containing her diary for the last six years. It discloses, in precisely 250 pages, the wretched tale of her marriage to Mr. Huntingdon, who had taken to drink, ill-treated his wife, and been unfaithful to her, and tells how she had finally run away from him and settled down under an assumed name in a house belonging to her brother. Presently Mrs. Graham or Huntingdon returns to her husband who is lying in delirium,

and soon afterwards he dies, and after some delays which cause the reader no anxiety whatever the lovers are at last able to be united.

It is quite clear that the book, which is full of several distressing scenes showing the influence of excessive drinking on language and character and the degradation which it causes, was written from a living model, the unhappy brother who had been with Anne at Thorp Green and was now drinking himself to death at Haworth Vicarage.

VI

TRAGEDY

I

BRANWELL BRONTË had been dismissed from his situation in July 1845; and though he gradually became more and more untrustworthy, more and more cunning in his attempts to secure his opium or his stimulants, so that both physically and mentally he was but the shipwreck of the former pert, entertaining youth, there seemed little prospect but that he would be a burden and disgrace to the household for many years to come. Mr. Grundy tells us of a visit he paid to the 'Black Bull' in the late summer of 1848, and describes in considerable detail how Branwell dined with him, and how he could never escape from his recollection of the unhappy man, standing when the evening was over in the road which led to his home, convulsed with bitter weeping. Unfortunately neither the dates nor the facts which Mr. Grundy gives are to be relied on, nor is Mr. Leyland much more reliable at this stage of the story. In his ingenuous attempt at hero-worship he gives us to understand that Branwell was generally hale and sprightly these days and did the honours of the vicarage when his gifted sisters were out on the moors or engaged in their literary labours. We know from

Charlotte's letters that for many months before the end they spent anxious nights and vigilant days, but the end came with comparative suddenness; and on Sunday, 24 September, after a few days' illness in which he recovered sanity and showed signs not merely of repentance but also of affection towards his relatives, Mr. Brontë's only son died. He seems to have insisted, like the Emperor Vespasian, upon dying on his feet, and one writer speaks of 'the last strange and inconsistent flash of expiring manhood which forbids us to regard with unmixed contempt the sufferer who had resolution enough to die standing if he had lived prostrate'. There could, in a sense, have been no feeling at the Parsonage more real than one of relief that the inevitable tragedy was ended at last. Charlotte, who as usual said the right thing in the best possible words, wrote a week later, 'The removal of our only brother must necessarily be regarded by us rather in the light of a mercy than a chastisement. Branwell was his father's and his sisters' pride and hope in boyhood, but since manhood the case has been otherwise. It has been our lot to see him take a wrong bent; to hope, expect, wait his return to the right path; to know the sickness of hope deferred, the dismay of prayer baffled; to experience despair at last—and now to behold the sudden early obscure close of what might have been a noble career.

'I do not weep from a sense of bereavement—there is no prop withdrawn, no consolation torn away, no dear companion lost—but for the wreck of talent, the ruin of promise, the untimely dreary extinction of what might have been a burning and a shining light. . . .'

Such were Charlotte's words: it were better perhaps to forget what Swinburne called him—'that lamentable and contemptible caitiff, contemptible not so much for his commonplace debauchery as for his abject selfishness, his lying pretention, and his nerveless cowardice'—and leave this unhappy story of an unhappy young man either with an epitaph chosen from Mr. Grundy's chapter,

'He was no domestic demon—he was just a man moving in a mist who lost his way.'

or with Matthew Arnold's words:

> On thee too did the Muses
> Bright in thy cradle smile;
> But some dark shadow came
> (I know not how) and interposed.

2

In the 'Golden Legend' Longfellow says

> I have marked it well, it must be true,
> Death never takes one alone, but two—
> Whenever he enters in at a door,

Under roof of gold or roof of thatch,
He always leaves it upon the latch,
And comes again ere the year is o'er.
Never one of a household only.

Certainly when Branwell died, while Charlotte was overwhelmed by the suddenness of the shock, and Anne's frailty and delicacy grew daily more pronounced, Emily's condition began to cause the greatest anxiety. Whether it was merely a cough and cold that had been neglected, or some natural weakness of constitution which was unsuspected hitherto, it also seemed that something had been taken from her vital powers by her brother's death, for latterly it had been Emily who constituted herself his champion, and always had a cheery word for him and a compassion never failing. As early as 29 October Charlotte wrote to Ellen Nussey to tell her that the cold and cough were very obstinate. She had pain in the chest and a shortness of breathing, and looked very thin and pale. 'Her reserved nature occasions me great uneasiness of mind. It is useless to question her—you get no answers. It is still more useless to recommend remedies—they are never adopted.' Emily's attitude towards illness, her refusal to admit that she was ill at all, and her distrust of anything to do with doctors, recall her Irish descent; such opinions are common among the Irish peasantry to-day. Only four days later Charlotte wrote to Mr. Williams, 'She is a real stoic

in illness: she neither seeks nor will accept any sympathy. To put any questions, to offer any aid, is to annoy; she will not yield a step before pain or sickness till forced; not one of her ordinary avocations will she voluntarily renounce'. In his reply to this letter Mr. Williams evidently suggested homoeopathic treatment. Charlotte's answer, dated 22 November, throws a searching light on her sister's strange disposition.

> 'I put your most friendly letter into Emily's hands as soon as I had myself perused it, taking care, however, not to say a word in favour of homeopathy—that would not have answered. It is best usually to leave her to form her own judgement, and especially not to advocate the side you wish her to favour; if you do, she is sure to lean in the opposite direction, and ten to one will argue herself into non-compliance. Hitherto she has refused medicine, rejected medical advice; no reasoning, no entreaty, has availed to induce her to see a physician. After reading your letter she said "Mr. Williams' intention was kind and good, but he was under a delusion: homoeopathy was only another form of quackery".'

It is in this same letter that we get our last vivid picture of the three sisters together. Charlotte sat reading aloud the review of *Wuthering Heights* in the

North American Review, which has been already mentioned, and studied 'the ferocious authors. Ellis, the "man of uncommon talents, but dogged, brutal and morose", sat leaning back in his easy chair, drawing his impeded breath as best he could, and looking, alas! piteously pale and wasted; it is not his wont to laugh, but he smiled half-amused and half in scorn as he listened. Acton was sewing, no emotion ever stirs him to loquacity, so he only smiled too, dropping at the same time a single word of calm amazement to hear his character so darkly portrayed'.

So the melancholy tale went on. On the 9th of December Charlotte submitted a statement of her sister's condition to be sent through Mr. Williams to Dr. Epps, so as to receive advice by the homoeopathic treatment; but there was no hope now. Daily her cough grew worse and her breathing more difficult. Her family, as they saw her wasting away before their eyes, again implored her to take to her bed and see a doctor. Again she refused to surrender. Every day she struggled from her bed at seven, insisted on doing her share of the housework and the sewing, and retired, torn with coughing at ten. On the 19th of December she got up as usual, and took up her knitting, but was obviously in an agony of pain. About midday she said, 'If you will send for a doctor I will see him now', and very soon afterwards fell back on the sofa, dead. On her funeral day, her dog, Keeper,

followed the bier up to the family vault in the chancel, and lay on the floor of the pew while the burial-service was being read. The last poem she wrote, perhaps actually found in her rosewood desk by Charlotte when she was dead, was that strange, stoic swan-song, now enshrined among the grandest poems in our language.

No coward soul is mine,
No trembler in the world's storm-troubled sphere:
I see heaven's glory shine,
And faith shines equal, arming me from fear.

O God within my breast,
Almighty, ever-present deity!
Life—that in me has rest,
As I—undying Life—have power in thee!

Vain are the thousand creeds
That move men's hearts: unutterably vain;
Worthless as withered weeds,
Or idlest froth amid the boundless main,

To waken doubt in one
Holding so fast by thine infinity;
So surely anchored on
The steadfast rock of immortality.

With wide-embracing love
Thy spirit animates eternal years,
Pervades and broods above,
Changes, sustains, dissolves, creates and rears.

Though earth and man were gone,
And suns and universe ceased to be,
And thou were left alone,
Every existence would exist in thee.

There is not room for death,
Nor atom that his might could render void:
Thou—thou art Being and Breath,
And what thou art may never be destroyed.

3

Soon after Emily was dead, a doctor who was called in to examine the youngest sister confirmed Charlotte's fears that she was suffering from consumption in an advanced stage and could not live many months longer. In the spring of 1849 she seemed a little better, and it was decided that she should be sent with Charlotte and Ellen Nussey for a visit to Scarborough in the hope that the sea-air and the change might do her good. Leaving Haworth on the 24th of May and spending a night in York, they reached the coast on the 25th, and on the 26th Anne drove for a hour on the sands. The 27th was a Sunday and they persuaded her not to go to church. On the Monday morning she became worse, and the doctor who was sent for told her, when she asked how long she had to live, that the end was very near. She died about two o'clock that afternoon,

saying she was very happy. She was buried two days later in the churchyard of Scarborough Parish Church, the only member of the family who was not laid to rest in the chancel of Haworth Church. Not very long before her death she composed a characteristic little hymn, which Charlotte records as her last poem and which has often been sung and quoted, especially in the county of her birth. These are some of the verses:

I hoped that with the brave and strong
My portioned task might lie;
To toil amid the busy throng,
With purpose pure and high.

But God has fixed another part,
And He has fixed it well:
I said so with my bleeding heart,
When first the anguish fell.

Then let me serve Thee from my heart,
Whate'er may be my fate,
Whether thus early to depart,
Or yet awhile to wait.

If Thou shouldst bring me back to life,
More humbled I should be;
More wise, more strengthened for the strife,
More apt to lean on Thee.

Should death be standing at the gate,
  Thus should I keep my vow;
But, Lord, whatever be my fate,
  Oh! let me serve Thee now.

So Ellis and Acton Bell died: and Currer Bell, whose identity was as yet only known to the publishers at Cornhill, was left alone with her father, now aged seventy-two.

VII

FAME

CURRER BELL'S second published novel *Shirley* was begun soon after the gratifying reception of *Jane Eyre*, continued at intervals during the terrible days of the illness and death of her brother and sisters, and published in October 1849. It shows signs of the stress and sorrow under which it was written, and the third volume, beginning with the chapter headed 'The Valley of the Shadow of Death' reads as if it was composed considerably later than the former two. Yet *Shirley* too was an immediate success, particularly with north-country folks, and few people today can fail to find the opening scenes both novel and attractive. Curates had rarely appeared in English fiction except to be treated with reverence; and the opening words of *Shirley*, 'Of late years, an abundant shower of curates has fallen on the North of England . . .' are at least arresting, though some people, for example Charles Kingsley, have found the whole of the clerical episodes distressing.

In the opening stages of the story we are confronted with a gentle maiden called Caroline Helston, niece and ward of a masterful Yorkshire vicar, who is a strong contrast to his own curate and those of the neighbouring townships. Caroline is in love with her

cousin, Robert Moore, a mill-owner, who is more cultured and advanced in his ideas than his neighbours, and being engaged in equipping his mill with machinery he is by no means popular with a section of the community and many of his own workpeople. Robert, though he does not admit it either openly or to his own heart, probably returns the affection which Caroline feels for him, when suddenly a rich, proud, passionate, whimsical yet noble girl, Shirley Keeldar —who was drawn from Charlotte's idea of her sister Emily—comes on the scene. Caroline becomes her devoted friend and admirer, but she and Robert Moore find themselves more and more closely drawn to one another, and poor, silent Caroline is left to watch and note the increasing warmth of their sentiments. Such is the theme of the first two volumes. We are given in succession various scenes of life in this country district: we meet the curates at tea, we have a school-feast, and a night-attack upon the mill, we read how Shirley (like sister Emily) was bitten by a mad dog; but the authoress seems to have little or no idea how the book will end, and seems to be prolonging the tale as it were until her characters work out their own destiny. Suddenly in volume three they take the bit in their teeth. Louis Moore, a brother of Robert, appears on the scene. He had formerly taught Shirley French, and is obviously devoted to her. The couples gradually re-sort themselves into

more satisfactory combinations, we say a reluctant farewell to the curates, and we finally read, in Charlotte Brontë's most characteristic style:

> 'it is August, the bells clash out again, not only through Yorkshire, but through England: from Spain, the voice of a trumpet has sounded long: it now waxes louder and louder; it proclaims Salamanca won. This night is Briarfield to be illuminated. On this day the Fieldhead tenantry dine together; the Hollow's mill work-people will be assembled for a like purpose; the schools have a grand treat. This morning there were two marriages solemnized in Briarfield Church—Louis Gérard Moore, Esq., late of Antwerp, to Shirley, daughter of the late Charles Cave Keeldar, Esq., of Fieldhead: Robert Gérard Moore, Esq., of Hollow's Mill, to Caroline, niece of the Rev. Mathewson Helston, M.A., Rector of Briarfield.'

As has been said above, it was the publication of *Shirley* that disclosed to the world the identity of Currer Bell. A native of Haworth who had removed to Liverpool read the book and recognized some of the scenery and the curates, and felt confident that it could be written by nobody but a resident of his native village. But who was capable of doing so except the shy, silent daughter of the vicar, a lady whom the village folk knew to have literary leanings? So the secret spread, first through the north of

England, then to the London world, and then back again to the West Riding of Yorkshire which was delighted to find itself in print, to the two servants at the vicarage, Tabby and Martha—the household was in comparatively affluent circumstances now owing to the £500 pounds received for *Jane Eyre* and a similar sum for *Shirley*—and to the curates who blushed over their immortality. Charlotte Brontë was famous, and Haworth shone with a reflected glory. Great numbers of people started to drive over to see the cradle of this obscure genius, and have been doing so ever since; many crowded the church to catch a glimpse of the gifted novelist in her pew; and though Charlotte herself cared little for this sudden fame, her father was very proud of it all, and welcomed the visitors who came to stare reverently at his daughter.

In November 1849 Charlotte paid her second long visit to London. She stopped with Mrs. Smith, the mother of the publisher, in Westbourne Place, and was treated with a deference which affected her immensely. The hospitable welcome which she received touched her heart, and the comfort of the London house was pleasant to one who was used to the Spartan life and fare of the damp, stone-floored vicarage. It was in the course of this visit that she had her first meeting with Thackeray, who was always her greatest idol, second only perhaps to the

Duke of Wellington, and to whom she had dedicated the second edition of *Jane Eyre*. He himself has recorded his account of that meeting.

'I saw her first just as I rose out of an illness from which I had never thought to recover. I remember the trembling little frame, the little hand, the great honest eyes. An impetuous honesty seemed to me to characterize the woman. Twice I recollect she took me to task for what she held to be errors in doctrine. She spoke her mind out. She jumped too rapidly to conclusions. She formed conclusions that might be wrong, and built up whole theories of character upon them. New to the London world, she entered it with an independent, indomitable spirit of her own; and judged of contemporaries, and especially spied out arrogance or affectation, with extraordinary keenness of vision. She was angry with her favourites if their conduct or conversation fell below her ideal. Often she seemed to me to be judging the London folk prematurely: but perhaps the city is rather angry at being judged. I found an austere little Joan of Arc marching in upon us, and rebuking our easy lives, our easy morals. She gave me the impression of being a very pure and lofty and high-minded person. A great and holy reverence of right and truth seemed to be with her always.'

It was in the course of this visit also that her friend-

ship with Miss Harriet Martineau began. Perhaps friendship is hardly the right word, for it always seems as though Charlotte was a little overwhelmed by Miss Martineau, that strange restless intolerant personage, with her 'cold water cure', her experiments in farming at Ambleside, and her dabblings in mesmerism. The pair met again at Miss Martineau's home in the Lake District, and a considerable number of letters passed between them, many of which were concerned with a novel for which Miss Martineau was anxious for Charlotte to assist her in finding a publisher; but a breach came later, when Charlotte was mortally offended by a criticism of certain aspects of *Jane Eyre* made by the other, and in spite of the latter's efforts to heal the wound, the distinguished authoress refused to resume their friendly relations.

Charlotte returned to spend Christmas of 1849 at home, and it must have been a melancholy season—the first in which she and her father had been quite alone; and then followed early in 1850 a visit to the Nusseys at Brookroyd. It was in January of that year that G. H. Lewes wrote his attack upon *Shirley* in the *Edinburgh Review*, which occasioned Charlotte's spirited letter in reply—'I can be on my guard against my enemies, but God deliver me from my friends!'—and later in the same year she paid her third visit to London, in the course of which she sat for her

portrait to George Richmond, the artist, the famous portrait now in the National Portrait Gallery, which was acquired by bequest on the death of Charlotte's husband, Mr. Nicholls.

The mention of Mr. Nicholls suggests that this is a suitable place to make a brief digression about the Haworth curates. The population of the village had increased very largely during Mr. Brontë's incumbency, and from 1838 onwards, when he was over sixty, he was allowed assistance in his parochial duties. 'I applied', said Mr. Brontë in characteristic periods, 'to the justly venerated Apostolical Bishop of this diocese, requesting his Lordship to send me a curate adequate to the wants and wishes of the parishioners. This application was not in vain. Our Diocesan, in the scriptural character of Overlooker and Head of his clergy, made an admirable choice which more than answered my expectation.' His first regular curate was the Rev. William Weightman, who seems to have been a great favourite. He was kind and attentive to the young ladies at the vicarage, and is frequently mentioned, in flippant terms, under the nickname of Miss Celia Amelia, in Charlotte's letters to her Ellen. Moreover, he is said to have been the only man, apart from her father and brother, whom Emily could tolerate. He was clearly a mercurial person given to mild flirtations—'bonny, pleasant, light-hearted, good-tempered, generous,

careless, fickle, and unclerical' are the adjectives used over him by Charlotte in 1841, and he died in September 1842, shortly before Miss Branwell, while Charlotte and Emily were in Brussels. Branwell Brontë calls him once his closest friend, and Mr. Brontë preached a funeral sermon for him, which was printed—price sixpence. His successor was Mr. James William Smith, whom Charlotte pilloried as Mr. Malone, curate of Briarfield in *Shirley*. In 1844 Charlotte wrote, in the style which she kept for her letters to Ellen Nussey, 'Mr. Smith be hanged! I never thought very well of him, and I am much disposed to think very ill of him at this blessed minute.' When Mr. Smith left, his place was temporarily filled by Mr. Grant, master of the Haworth Grammar School, who is Mr. Donne, curate of Whinbury in *Shirley*. The third curate of *Shirley*, Mr. Sweeting of Nunnely, represents Mr. Bradley, curate of Oakworth, near Keighley. But Mr. Smith's permanent successor was the Rev. Arthur Bell Nicholls, who was a year Charlotte's junior. He was Mr. Macarthey of *Shirley*. Here is a quotation from chapter thirty-seven of that novel.

> 'Perhaps I ought to remark that, on the premature and sudden vanishing of Mr. Malone from the stage of Briarfield parish . . . there came as his successor another Irish curate, Mr. Macarthey. I am happy to be able to inform you, *with truth*,

that this gentleman did as much credit to his country as Malone had done it discredit; he proved himself as decent, decorous and conscientious, as Peter was rampant, boisterous, and (this last epithet I choose to suppress because it would let the cat out of the bag). He laboured faithfully in the parish; the schools, both Sunday and day-schools, flourished under his sway like green bay-trees. Being human, of course he had his faults; these, however, were proper, steady-going, clerical faults: the circumstance of finding himself invited to tea with a dissenter would unhinge him for a week; the spectacle of a Quaker wearing his hat in a church, the thought of an unbaptised fellow-creature being interred with Christian rites—these things could make strange havoc in Mr. Macarthey's physical and mental economy; otherwise he was sane and rational, diligent and charitable.'

In the early stages of Mr. Nicholls's curacy there are caustic references to him in Charlotte's letters to Ellen; but little by little she, and the parishioners of Haworth as a body, learned the sterling qualities which were hidden by his natural shyness, and we know that he showed great delight in the caricature of himself which he read in *Shirley*.

In June 1851 Charlotte paid another visit to London to see the Great Exhibition in Hyde Park. Here she tasted her earliest experience of fame and

learned what it was to be made much of and lionized. She made the acquaintance of many people who were distinguished by their renown or rank. She was introduced to the Earl of Carlisle, Monckton Milnes, the Marquis of Westminster, and Lord Ellesmere; she breakfasted with Benjamin Rogers, and saw Rachel act. She writes accounts of these gratifying attentions to her father in the most modest way. Perhaps the most interesting incident which occurred during the course of this visit was the evening when she was present at one of Thackeray's lectures. Thackeray pointed out the famous Currer Bell to several of his friends, and at the end of the lecture came down to speak to her and asked her what she thought of it. This incident was immortalized later in *Villette*, when Paul Emanuel asks Lucy Snowe at the close of his discourse, 'Qu'en dites-vous?' Presently Charlotte rose to go, and to her horror saw that the audience had made a lane down which she had to pass, running the gauntlet of the inspection of the whole assembly as though she had been some royal personage. She found it rather distressing, and Mrs. Gaskell, when relating the episode in her biography, is a little severe in her strictures about the manners of modern society. When we read of it to-day it strikes us as a touching piece of homage to genius, formidable perhaps to the recipient, but not without its gratifying side.

So the years 1851 and 1852 wore on. When at Haworth she was working hard at *Villette*; but even at Haworth, apart from the crowds of curious sight-seers, the local gentry began to take an interest in the genius at their doors. Sir James Kay-Shuttleworth, father of the present Lord Shuttleworth, and his wife, who lived at Gawthorpe Hall in Lancashire across the moors, came to see her and invited her for a visit. She accepted an invitation to Sir James's country cottage at Bowness; and while stopping there she met Mrs. Gaskell for the first time, and paid a call at Fox How, where Dr. Thomas Arnold's widow lived with her family. It was upon this visit to the Lake District that Matthew Arnold met Charlotte and Miss Martineau, and wrote to a friend, 'I talked to Miss Brontë—past thirty, with expressive grey eyes though—of her curates, of French novels, and her education in a school at Brussels, and sent the lions roaring to their dens at half-past nine.' And Matthew Arnold's sister, Mrs. Forster, who paid a visit to Haworth about this time, has written, 'There is something touching in the sight of that little creature entombed in such a place and moving about like a spirit, especially when you think that the slight, still frame encloses a force of strong, fiery life which nothing has been able to freeze or extinguish.'

Early in 1853 *Villette* was published, and had a great reception. The reviews were generally favour-

able, and it is usually regarded as the greatest of her four novels.

Lucy Snowe (Charlotte had at first called her Lucy Frost) is an orphan whom we meet at the house of her godmother, Mrs. Bretton of Bretton, where she pays visits twice a year. Mrs. Bretton has a son, John Graham Bretton, who is going to be a doctor; and on one of her visits Lucy also meets a little girl called Paulina, who becomes greatly attached to John Bretton. Eight years later Lucy is companion to a Miss Marchmont, who dies unexpectedly without leaving her any money, and she decides to become a teacher. She leaves for London, stops at the Chapter Coffee House, sails for Ostend, called Boue Marine, meeting on the boat a young English girl, Miss Ginevra Fanshawe, and then makes for Villette, which is the authoress's name for Brussels. On arrival she does not know where to stay, and a polite young Englishman recommends a certain inn to her, but she loses her way, and after much wandering, notices a house which bears a notice stating that it is a pensionat de demoiselles and that its directrice is Madame Beck. Lucy rings and asks to be taken in, but Madame is doubtful. However, after consulting Monsieur Paul, the professor of French at her school, who puts on his spectacles, examines Lucy's face, and says, 'Engage her. If good predominates in that nature, the action will bring its own reward; if evil—

eh bien! ma cousine, ce sera toujours une bonne œuvre', Madame consents.

The school is well conducted, but very closely supervised in every department by Madame, who reads letters, ransacks drawers, and patrols the whole place, night and day, with silent tread. At first Lucy is merely a nurse for Madame's small children, but later the professor of English is discharged, and Lucy is appointed in her place. Among her pupils is Miss Fanshawe, whom she met on the boat, a heartless flirt who has two lovers, Monsieur de Hamel and Isidore. The latter turns out to be a young English doctor, known as Dr. John, and is identical with Lucy's guide on the first night of her arrival. Madame Beck, who is a widow, is in love with Dr. John, but he seems to have fixed his affections on Ginevra Fanshawe. On Madame Beck's birthday they decide to have a play, and Monsieur Paul acts as manager-in-chief. He is a choleric creature with whom Lucy has already had constant quarrels. On the day of the play one of the girls falls sick, and Monsieur Paul decides that Lucy must take her place. She refuses, largely because if she did, she would have to be dressed like a man, and there is a terrible scene. At last Monsieur Paul wins his way, and Lucy turns out to be the success of the evening's entertainment.

When the long vacation arrives, poor Lucy is left alone. Driven by the horrors of loneliness, she has

recourse to confession at a solemn old church ('Mon père, je suis Protestante'), and later, unable to endure her solitude any longer, she wanders through the streets and is picked up exhausted. When she recovers consciousness she finds herself in the house of her godmother Mrs. Bretton, and with her is her son, none other than Isidore or Dr. John.

Lucy is ill for several weeks, and is quite obviously passionately in love with Dr. John, who takes her to concerts and lectures, where they almost always meet Monsieur Paul, scowling with jealousy. One evening they go to the theatre, where they see Rachel act, and there is a fire and a panic, and Dr. John saves the life of a young girl, who turns out to be no other than little Paulina of chapter one. Paulina and Dr. John soon fall in love with one another, while Lucy presently becomes reconciled to the fact that Dr. John does not care for her, and is clearly becoming daily more attractive to and attracted by Monsieur Paul. She still quarrels with him, breaks his spectacles, makes him a watch-chain for a birthday present which she does not give him because he expects it, but the love is there. Madame Beck by many devices tries to prevent the two from meeting, and her espionage becomes closer and more effective than before; but ere M. Paul departs for Guadeloupe for three years to look after an estate, he manages with great difficulty to have an interview with Lucy, and establishes

her in a delightful, new nest of a house where she is to set up a school of her own and wait for his return. Then they parted, 'he gave his pledge and then his farewell'. The book ends with a vivid picture of an autumn storm three years later, with Lucy waiting for her lover. The Atlantic was strewn with wrecks, and it is left uncertain whether Monsieur Paul's barque wins safely home.

Such is *Villette*, a book full of interruptions, marred by surprising and superfluous coincidences, and devoid of any real unity, yet eminently successful, partly owing to the vigour of its style and the rapidity of its incidents, but even more because of the intensity of the autobiographical details. Charlotte Brontë herself lives in every act and thought of Lucy Snowe; the whole incident of the confession, for instance, is described in full in a letter written from Brussels to Emily; Madame Beck is Mme Héger, and M. Paul Emanuel is clearly based upon M. Constantin Héger.

With the publication of *Villette* there began two years of unqualified happiness for Charlotte Brontë —perhaps the first real happiness which she had ever known. Her health, which had not been satisfactory since the death of Anne, was distinctly better; the money gained by her books brought many extra comforts and little luxuries to the vicarage; she was in regular receipt of parcels of new books from her publishers, in return for which she wrote letter after

letter to Mr. Williams and other members of the firm, all of which reveal her shrewd opinions upon the writers and the topics of the time; and lastly there was Mr. Nicholls. We do not know when the curate first found that he had fallen in love with his vicar's daughter—possibly it was when he first read his own character in *Shirley*; but his first proposal of marriage was in December 1852. As in the case of all the proposals of marriage which she received, Charlotte sat down to write and tell Ellen all about it.

> 'As usual Mr. Nicholls sat with papa till between eight and nine o'clock; I then heard him open the parlour door as if going. I expected the clash of the front door. He stopped in the passage; he tapped; like lightning it flashed on me what was coming. He entered; he stood before me. What his words were you can guess; his manner you can hardly realize, nor I forget it. Shaking from head to foot, looking deadly pale, speaking low, vehemently, yet with difficulty, he made me for the first time feel what it costs a man to declare affection where he doubts response.'

Charlotte promised him a reply next day, hurried him from the house, and told her father, who was so much agitated and alarmed—he was seventy-five—that she made haste to promise to refuse the proposal. Doubtless Mr. Brontë, who had seen so many distinguished people paying court to his daughter, was at first

shocked at the idea of a poor curate asking for her hand—why, it was only a few years ago that a member of the firm of publishers at Cornhill, a Mr. James Taylor, an adviser to the firm next below Mr. Williams himself, had proposed for Charlotte, so that perhaps it is no wonder that, to quote Charlotte's own words, 'Papa . . . says the match would be a degradation, that I should be throwing myself away, that he expects me, if I marry at all to do very differently'. Moreover, Charlotte herself, though she later became thoroughly devoted to her husband, was at this moment quite indifferent. 'Attachment to Mr. Nicholls', she writes, 'you are aware I never entertained'; and again, 'My own objections arise from a sense of incongruity and uncongeniality in feelings, tastes, principles.'

Matters were thus rather strained at the vicarage. So, early in the year 1853 Charlotte paid her last visit to London in order to look after the final proof-sheets of her novel *Villette*. On her return Mr. Nicholls was still at Haworth, and had not yet succeeded in his attempt to obtain another curacy; and there was a trying scene on the 4th of March when the Bishop of Ripon, Dr. Longley, came over for the day and the parsons of the vicinity stopped for supper and tea. Mr. Nicholls appeared dejected beyond words, and indeed showed such temper towards his vicar that even the bishop noticed it. He also cast

a look at Charlotte when she turned away from him, which alarmed one of the servants. As the days went on he continued either to sit drearily in his rooms, or go for solitary walks, or visit his one friend, the Rev. George Sowden, vicar of Hebden Bridge, but he never spoke to Mr. Brontë or his daughter. He left Haworth apparently for ever, on 27 May 1853, after receiving a testimonial of respect and gratitude for his nine years' service from the parishioners, but there were two painful scenes to be endured before he went. On Whitsunday, during the Communion Service, he lost control of his emotions when he realized how soon he was to leave the place which held the object of his love. 'He struggled, faltered, then lost command over himself—stood before my eyes and in the sight of all the communicants white, shaking, voiceless. Papa was not there, thank God! . . . He made a great effort, but could only with difficulty whisper and falter through the service. I suppose he thought this would be the last time.' When the matter was reported to Mr. Brontë he was merely angry and called his curate an unmanly driveller. Then again the evening before his departure he called at the vicarage to say good-bye and return the deeds of the National School into the vicar's hands. Charlotte did not see him in her father's study, and he left the house without a word to her. But seeing that he lingered before going out

of the gate, she went out to him and found him leaning against the garden-door, sobbing and in a paroxysm of anguish. She spoke to him, and though but a few almost inarticulate words were uttered, they were such that the curate knew that she was not 'cruelly blind and indifferent to his constancy and grief'.

In September 1853 Mrs. Gaskell visited Haworth Vicarage for the first time, in return for a visit paid by Charlotte to Manchester in the spring. It was on this occasion that she learned so much about the life and sorrows of the family in quiet conversation with Charlotte. She gives us an arresting picture of the placid life in the silent house—a walk on the moors, dinner at two, Charlotte's picture by Richmond on the wall and an engraving of Lawrence Thackeray, two recesses filled with recently published books. She saw, too, the picture of the three sisters which Branwell had painted, she discussed the novels with Charlotte, and she learned much from her own lips of those facts which she included so fearlessly and with such unfortunate results in the biography. Charlotte herself was in better health than she had been for some time; but all was not yet well. Mr. de Renzi, the new curate, did not fall into the old vicar's ways, and finally little by little the father came round to the idea that Mr. Nicholls should return to his curacy and marry his daughter. In April 1854 Charlotte wrote to Miss Wooler:

'I must tell you that since I wrote last papa's mind has gradually come round to a view very different from that he once took; and that after some correspondence, and as the result of a visit Mr. Nicholls paid here about a week ago, it was agreed that he was to resume the curacy of Haworth, as soon as papa's present assistant is provided with a situation, and in due course of time he is to be received as an inmate into this house. It gives me unspeakable content to see that now my father has once admitted this new view of the case, he dwells on it very complacently. In all arrangements his convenience and seclusion will be scrupulously respected. Mr. Nicholls seems deeply to feel the wish to comfort and sustain his declining years.'

So the matter was settled. The little, dark, tiny room below the stairs, scarcely bigger than a large cupboard, was carefully prepared and decorated as a study for Mr. Nicholls, and while this was being done Charlotte paid three visits, the first to Mrs. Gaskell at Plymouth Grove, Manchester. She was back at home by 22 May, and the wedding-day was fixed for 29 June 1854. The only guests were to be Ellen Nussey and Miss Wooler, and the officiating clergyman was to be the Rev. Sutcliffe Sowden, brother of the Vicar of Hebden Bridge, who was to stay the night before the ceremony with Mr. Grant, Incumbent of Oxenhope. The wedding-dress was

white trimmed with green, and the hour of the marriage was eight o'clock in the morning. All went well, except that the very night before Mr. Brontë announced that he was too unwell to be present, and after some searching of the Book of Common Prayer it was found that nothing was said about the sex of the person from whose hands the minister received the bride, so Miss Wooler gave Charlotte away.

The honeymoon was spent at Banagher, King's County, Ireland, with the bridegroom's cousins, the Bells, and the married couple soon settled down to a quiet life in their Yorkshire home. Ellen Nussey visited them in October 1854, and it was after her visit that Charlotte wrote to her saying that Arthur wished her to burn all his wife's letters. It seems that Miss Nussey did not care very much for Mr. Nicholls, and it is as fortunate for the world that she disobeyed as it is unfortunate that her own letters to Charlotte, and letters from other correspondents, including M. Héger, were destroyed. It is unlikely that Charlotte would part with them, and we must rather think that Mr. Nicholls destroyed them when his wife was gone. In November 1854 Sir James Kay-Shuttleworth offered Mr. Nicholls the valuable living of Padiham, but the duty which he owed to his aged father-in-law was too strong to permit him to accept it. We have one glimpse of the pair about this time. One evening at the close of 1854 they

were sitting by the fire, listening to the howling of the wind round the house, when Charlotte said, 'If you had not been with me, I must have been writing now'. She ran upstairs, brought down and read aloud the beginning of a new tale. When she had finished, Mr. Nicholls said, 'The critics will accuse you of repetition'. She replied, 'Oh! I shall alter that. I always begin two or three times before I can please myself'. The fragment which she read was *Emma*, of which two chapters, or sixteen pages, exist. It opens with a scene at a school—Fuschia Lodge, fees £40 per annum—when a gentleman, who is apparently a rich landowner, one Conway Fitzgibbon, leaves his daughter at the seminary. She is petted and spoiled as a rich man's child, until it is discovered that her father is a 'man of straw'. Then the head mistress, Miss Wilcox, shows hostility and cruelty to her charge, who is then befriended by a local gentleman, a Mr. Ellin.

In November 1854 Charlotte caught a cold, and early in 1855, when they were spending a few days at Gawthorpe Hall, she took a fresh chill. Then her health grew worse, and the doctor confirmed her view that she was to become a mother. She took to her bed about 25 January. Her last dated letter is to Miss Laetitia Wheelwright. It was written on 15 February, and has the words, 'No kinder, better husband than mine, it seems to me there can be in the world.

I do not want now for kind companionship in health and the tenderest nursing in sickness'. At first there was little to alarm, and the illness was merely considered natural to one in Mrs. Nicholls's condition. But in the latter days of March there was a change for the worse, and it seemed clear that her constitution, which was probably not naturally strong, could not defeat the weakness. Her last recorded words were, 'I am not going to die, am I? He won't separate us—we have been so happy'. She died on Easter Eve, 31 March 1855, in the thirty-ninth year of her age, and was buried with her mother, brother, and three sisters in the family tomb in the chancel of Haworth Church.

VIII

THE END OF THE STORY

THE news of the death of Charlotte Brontë made little stir in the public press; in the fifties the newspapers made less of obituary notices than they do now. It was not until Friday, 6 April, that *The Times* published in small print a brief quotation from the *Manchester Guardian*.

> 'We regret to announce the death of Mrs. Nichol, formerly Charlotte Brontë, who under the nom de plume of Currer Bell established a lasting reputation by the publication of *Jane Eyre*. We have two other novels from her pen, *Shirley* and *Villette*, and all are especially distinguished in their power of conception and vigorous portrayal of character. The unfortunate lady, who was the last survivor of a family of six, died on Saturday last, at her father's vicarage, Haworth, Yorks.'

Mrs. Nicholls had been four months dead before her father and husband decided that, as certain erroneous notices about Charlotte had appeared in print, a biography should be compiled. They asked Mrs. Gaskell to undertake the task. A month before Ellen Nussey had suggested to Mr. Nicholls that Mrs. Gaskell should reply to a malignant article in *Sharpe* entitled 'A Few Words about Jane Eyre', but

the article only caused Mr. Brontë intense amusement. Mrs. Gaskell, who was eminently suitable through her own gifts and literary reputation, went about the work with extraordinary energy. She visited almost all the places which had played a part in Charlotte's short life: she stopped at the 'Black Bull' and made full inquiries about Branwell's associates and his character. She visited Cowan Bridge, she conversed with Monsieur Héger, and she wrote pages of questions to Ellen Nussey. The finished work was given to the world in two volumes. At first it was well received, and Mr. Brontë, who was nearly blind and merely heard certain extracts read aloud to him by his son-in-law, expressed his strong approval. But not long afterwards Mrs. Gaskell found herself in difficulties. It appeared that there was scarcely anybody at all who was not offended by something in the book. On further consideration Mr. Brontë disliked the references to his bad temper, his habit of firing off his pistol on the moor, his burning of dresses and the like, all of which he said were the malicious inventions of a servant whom he had dismissed. Mr. Nicholls felt that he was stigmatized as a cold and far from affectionate husband. The Yorkshire people resented the patronizing air in which, they said, an authoress from the neighbouring palatine county had described them as savage and uncivilized. The friends of Mr. Carus-Wilson were

up in arms over the frank identification in the biography of the school in *Jane Eyre* with Cowan Bridge, and Brocklehurst with Mr. Carus-Wilson. Rectors' wives who had been at school there in the 'twenties wrote to the papers and said that the food had not been bad and that there had not been deaths from typhus, and there was a spirited battle in the pages of the *Halifax Guardian* between Mr. Nicholls and one of these ladies, who found the tone of the Haworth curate's remarks distinctly offensive. Above all indignation ran high on the part of Lady Scott and her friends. Lady Scott had been formerly Mrs. Edmund Robinson, wife of Branwell Brontë's employer at Thorp Green. Charlotte had clearly believed all the wild statements of her wretched brother after his dismissal, and Mrs. Gaskell had not only believed Charlotte, but expressed the facts as she understood them with rhetorical vigour—'his pockets were found filled with letters from the woman to whom he was attached' and much more of the same kind. It was necessary to make public apology in the press and to withdraw the first edition. A second edition with many offending passages expunged was published later in the same year.

Mrs. Gaskell's work remains one of the greatest biographies written in the English language, and ranks with Lockhart's *Life of Scott* and Boswell's *Life of Johnson* as one of the classic biographies which

have won fame not merely by the distinction of their subject but also by the manner and method of the compiler. It is not too much to say that a considerable portion of the great interest shown by the world in Haworth and its prodigies is due to Mrs. Gaskell's noble work. Many people consider that Mrs. Gaskell herself is a much underrated authoress: but had she never written *Cranford* and had only *The Life of Charlotte Brontë* to her name she would have won high rank among Victorian authors. It is a pity perhaps that she had been Charlotte's familiar friend so short a time; but it is on the other hand most fortunate that there was among Charlotte's friends one so capable and so devoted.

In the same year the last of Charlotte's four novels was published, her first-born, *The Professor*, the ill-fated book which had travelled to many publishers accompanied, for a time at least, by *Wuthering Heights* and *Agnes Grey*, eleven years before. It suffers inevitably from comparison with *Villette*, for its plot is, of course, very similar, though it is approached from a diametrically opposite point of view.

William Crimsworth is the son of a bankrupt mill-owner, who had married into an aristocratic family. On his parents' death he is educated at Eton by his maternal uncles, but refuses to take orders and marry one of his six cousins, and prefers to join his elder brother, who is now owner of his late father's business.

His brother, however, treats him unkindly and refuses to give him more than a starvation wage, so that he migrates to Brussels, where he becomes professor of English at the school of a Monsieur Pelet, and is immediately both popular and successful with his classes. Next door, in the Rue d'Isabelle, there is a Pensionnat de Demoiselles, kept by Mlle Zoraide Reuter, who in due course invites Crimsworth to teach her girls English four afternoons a week, and who is herself personally interested in the young Englishman. With these classes, too, after an indifferent start, he is equally excellent and popular.

Among the under-mistresses at the girls' school is a small, shy, young teacher, not yet twenty, though she looks more, half English, half Swiss, named Mlle Henri, who is permitted to join the lessons and shows much more promise and ability than the phlegmatic Brabantoises. Crimsworth begins soon to take great interest in this new pupil, and so arouses the jealousy of Mlle Reuter, although the latter is actually engaged to be married to Monsieur Pelet of the boys' school next door. Indeed, the directrice goes so far as practically to dismiss Mlle Henri from her establishment. Crimsworth asks for her address, and when it is withheld, under the false plea of ignorance, he declines to teach any longer at the girls' school, and later quarrels with M. Pelet also, and is without employment.

However, not long afterwards after careful searching he finds Mlle Henri and becomes engaged to her, and, owing to the gratitude of a rich Dutchman whose son he has saved from drowning, he is appointed English teacher at a Brussels college, at a salary of 3,000 francs per annum, with the prospect of making as much again by private tuition. So the lovers marry. Mrs. Crimsworth sets up a girls' school, and by the time their son Victor is old enough to go to Eton like his father, they have saved up enough money to settle down in happy retirement in England.

Though *The Professor* is free from many of the weaknesses and incongruities of Charlotte's other three novels, and is a more complete entity than any of them, and though it is partially redeemed by a most original and admirable character, that of Mr. Hunsden, who is very like Mr. Yorke of *Shirley*, the novel is patently inferior to the others. It often seems distressingly sentimental, owing largely to the fact that the story is told throughout by a hero and not a heroine, and it lacks vigour except where Mlle Henri, who is, of course, Lucy Snowe or Charlotte herself, is on the stage. Much of it is incorporated in *Villette*, though in the latter, which was written ten years after Charlotte had left M. Héger's household, she felt herself able to write about her experiences at Brussels with much greater freedom.

We know little about the next six peaceful years during which Mr. Nicholls and Mr. Brontë were together at Haworth. Mr. Brontë died on 7 June 1861, aged eighty-four, and was buried within the altar-rails of his church in the presence of a great concourse, by Dr. Burnet, vicar of Bradford, his son-in-law being the chief mourner. On the whole it is quite safe to say that a good deal of nonsense has been written and spoken about the father of the Brontës. There is little evidence that he was selfish, ill-tempered, and cantankerous. Pleased as he was at first to be promoted to Haworth and become his own master, he found himself thrust, at the age of forty-three, into a place upon the edge of civilization, where he had little of that congenial society which he had enjoyed at Thornton, few external interests beyond his Sunday services, and small scope for exercising his intellect; and where, moreover, the man who minded his own business and interfered as little as possible with his neighbours was most highly respected. Then as now the Yorkshire folks liked a man to keep himself to himself; and so Mr. Brontë, harassed by increasing indigestion and eye-trouble, gradually became something of a hermit and yielded to old age. It is significant, for instance, that when he escorted Charlotte and Emily to Brussels, he returned the very next day. In real old age he experienced a kind of rejuvenescence in the fame of his

daughter, of which he was intensely proud; but on the whole, he seems to have abandoned himself, comparatively early in his career, to pessimism, solitude, and dyspepsia. It seems clear that his children owed him a good many of the various factors which combined to exalt them to immortality, though it is difficult not to ascribe to the father's folly and short-sightedness the greater part of the tragedy of his only son.

When Mr. Brontë died, Mr. Nicholls, who had been seventeen years at Haworth, returned to Ireland, abandoned his orders, and settled down to the life of a country farmer at Banagher, in King's County, where his honeymoon had been spent. He married a second time—a cousin, Miss Bell, and had a long life of well-earned happiness. He died, nearly ninety years of age, in 1906. He too has suffered a little, though not so much as his father-in-law, from the hands of his biographers. It is clear that he was intensely Scotch, shy and slow to disclose his feelings. Like Jacob, he served a long apprenticeship for the hand of his wife, and when they were married in the end, it is certain that he brought her real happiness. In retirement in Ireland he showed himself difficult of access to Brontë relic-hunters; but to the day of his death the fame and reputation of his distinguished wife found in him a warm champion.

There have been four Incumbents of Haworth

since 1861. Mr. Brontë's successor, the Rev. John Wade, a graduate of Hertford College, Oxford, who held the living till 1898, bought some rectorial tithe in 1867 from a lay impropriator, so that since then there have been rectors of Haworth instead of vicars. In the year 1880, in spite of much protest and correspondence in the local press, the old church at Haworth was completely rebuilt; the foundation-stone was laid on Christmas Day, 1879, and the consecration took place in February 1881. The plan of the present church differs, internally at least, from the edifice which the Brontës knew. It is a large, pleasant, well-kept place, but similar to a score of churches in the West Riding. There is a marble slab at the west end which gives a list of the Brontë dead, and among other stained-glass windows there is one in the north aisle given by an anonymous American admirer, to the glory of God and in memory of Charlotte Brontë.

A new wing was added to the rectory, as it must now be called, in 1873, and the place was occupied by the rectors till 1928. A Brontë Society was formed in 1893, and such Brontë relics as were gradually collected were somewhat dingily housed in a couple of rooms over a bank. But in 1928 Sir James Roberts of Strathallan Castle, Perthshire, formerly proprietor of Saltaire Mills, near Bradford, who is a native of Haworth, and a keen admirer of the Brontë

writings, purchased the rectory from the church authorities and offered it as a free gift to the Brontë Society. Every effort was made to preserve or restore the house as it was in the days when the Brontës occupied it. A complete restoration was impossible owing to the new addition, but the main structure is still much as it was from 1820 to 1861. Great care has been taken to preserve this aspect both within and without, even to the point of protecting from defacement certain drawings scratched on the wall of the room used by the Brontë girls as their study, which are presumed to have been done by them and their brother. The whole place is beautifully clean and well arranged, with every room brightly lit and clearly labelled.

The new Brontë Society Museum and Library was opened by Lady Roberts on Saturday, 4 August 1928. On that occasion an address composed by the late Lord Haldane was read, as he himself could not be present, but the principal speaker was the generous donor. He said that he was one of the fast narrowing circle of Haworth veterans who remembered the famous family. He had heard Mr. Brontë preach in the pathetic blindness of his old age. Mr. Nicholls frequently visited the school house when the scholars were at their midday meal. Above all there rose the frail and unforgettable figure of Charlotte Brontë, who more than once stopped to speak to the lad who

HAWORTH PARSONAGE

now stood, a patriarch, before the assembly. The gifts matured within those walls and under the wide horizon of the Haworth moors had made the village a shrine for pilgrims from many lands; so that when the necessity of finding adequate accommodation for the Brontë treasure arose it seemed to him that here only, where for forty years the family had its hearth and home, was their true resting-place.

Early in January 1929 the finest private collection of Brontë treasures in the world, formed by the late Mr. Henry H. Bonnell of Philadelphia, arrived at the new Brontë Museum. It had been bequeathed to Haworth on condition that a suitable place for its reception, and particularly one free from any fear of fire, could be found. It includes the tiny manuscript booklets which the Brontë children spent so many hours in compiling, filled with the microscopic writing which characterized the early Brontë compositions. There is the earliest of Charlotte's stories composed at the age of eight, beginning 'There was once a little girl whose name was Ane'. There is a letter written by Charlotte when she was away from home; it was addressed to her father, and is inscribed in his handwriting as 'Charlotte's first letter'. There are a number of later manuscripts by Branwell, those that are printed in Francis Leyland's book. And there is Emily's rosewood writing-desk, containing memoranda in her own writing, receipted bills, a

letter, and clippings from newspapers of reviews of *Wuthering Heights*. The visitor finds much of the furniture set as nearly as possible in its original place, and the new wing is used as a storehouse for the rich collection of Brontë books of all kinds, and for the housing of articles which were not used by the family itself. It is pleasant to think that though the church could not be saved, the home of the Brontës is preserved for ever.

IX

THE VERDICT OF POSTERITY

CHARLOTTE BRONTË belongs, as we have tried to show, to the number of those blessed few who, by the capricious gift of fortune, gain reputation and renown while they are still alive. It is too much to say, as some have done, that in the early 'fifties she was the most famous woman in England; but even before her death it was generally acknowledged that her four novels were to rank among the most successful, and perhaps the most typical, of the Victorian Era. Nor has her reputation declined to any serious extent since her death. Her books are, it is true, in a special sense, old-fashioned; they 'date' much more than those of her idol Thackeray, for instance, but they have definitely secured the supreme if posthumous ambition of an author, and have acquired that mysterious compliment of being designated 'classics'. How far her own tragic story and romantic surroundings have contributed to keep her image and work still conspicuous in the mind of the public it is hard to say; just as the celebrity of Robert Louis Stevenson has almost certainly been fostered by his brave and desperate struggle against mortal sickness, his wanderings in the Pacific and his

picturesque disappearance to Vailima, so doubtless the lonely moors and the history of Haworth and her early end have kept Charlotte Brontë's name alive; and for every single individual who reads her books to-day it is probably true to say that there are a hundred who find an absorbing interest in the story of her life.

In one respect at least fate may have been kind to her in closing her career so soon. One cannot really feel sure that she could have produced any further work that would have added to her reputation, nor will many people now be found to support the words of Matthew Arnold, written when she had not been long dead.

> Strew with laurel the grave
> Of the early dying. Alas
> Early she goes on the path
> To the silent country, and leaves
> Half her laurels unwon,
> Dying too soon. Yet green
> Laurels she had and a course
> Short but redoubled by fame.

She had written four novels, all autobiographical, two dependent on her experience in Brussels, one drawn mainly from what she had dreamed and suffered as a governess, and one recalling her life as a vicar's daughter in a lonely country parish. It is

probable that she did not possess the material for many more.

Anne, the youngest, has shared in her sisters' glory. Had her brief, gentle life not been inextricably interwoven with the story of the Brontës there would have been no survival of her pleasant poems, no immortality even for that underrated novel, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*. Nobody has seriously attempted to maintain that Anne Brontë was a genius, though she clearly possessed talent of a high order, and considerable facility in both verse and prose.

The case of Emily is different from that of either of her sisters. She died practically unknown, except as Ellis Bell to a narrow circle, and from the date of her death her reputation has been steadily soaring, insomuch that her personality is becoming legendary, and now, eighty years on, she is even becoming an occasion for fiction. Shortly after her death Sydney Dobell's review of *Wuthering Heights* in the *Palladium* roused the attention of the literary world, and Charlotte, in both her private and her printed writings, constantly drew attention to her sister's genius. Then directly Charlotte was dead, Matthew Arnold wrote famous lines about Emily, in his poem called 'Haworth Churchyard'

> —and she
> (How shall I sing her?) whose soul
> Knew no fellow for might,

Passion, vehemence, grief,
Daring, since Byron died,
That world-famed son of fire—she who sank
Baffled, unknown, self-consumed;
Whose too bold dying song
Shook, like a clarion-blast, my soul.

But it must be remembered that in this poem, which in many respects is one of the poet's least successful elegies, Matthew Arnold is clearly in a laudatory mood, and covers with compliments not only Emily and Charlotte, but also Branwell and even Miss Harriet Martineau. It is highly probable that, though Mrs. Gaskell herself shirked the problem of Emily's character and greatness, it was her *Life of Charlotte Brontë* that first put the public into the way of investigating and discovering Emily's genius. Her part in the tragic drama of Haworth was so conspicuous that any one who became entranced by the story had of necessity to read Emily's poems and her novel. Then in 1877 came Swinburne's 'Note on Charlotte Brontë' which told the world among other things what manner of book *Wuthering Heights* was; and the world had just time to become interested when Miss A. Mary F. Robinson published her *Emily Brontë* in the Eminent Women Series. That is an admirable, if over-rhetorical work, though the authoress herself admits that she gave too great 'a

share to the shadows, to the manifold follies and failures of Branwell Brontë'; and we have in it for the first time a full yet reasonable account of Emily herself and of the various influences which contributed to the composition of *Wuthering Heights*. After that it only needed Swinburne's 'Essay on Emily Brontë', published in his *Miscellanies* in 1886, a brilliant and sensitive eulogy, to secure her position. Since then there have been other books about Emily, some sensible, some fantastical, but all of them unnecessary, if their object is to prove her greatness. For she is acknowledged now—one may say it without any fear of contradiction—as belonging to that class of genius which reaches immortality spontaneously, without question, criticism, or hesitation, the class in which the name of Shakespeare heads all the rest.

X

THE BRONTË PROBLEMS

THERE are possibly as many as five Brontë problems, and all have been mentioned or even partially discussed in the previous pages. It only remains to enumerate them in chronological order, and to add what may be regarded as the common-sense view about them in the light of all the information now available.

(1) Little more need be added about the Cowan Bridge controversy. If one considers all the details, after the lapse of a century, it is scarcely possible to avoid the conclusion that, though Charlotte was at an impressionable age when she heard or saw the facts, and so may have been led to exaggerate, there must have been sufficient neglect, unkindness, and carelessness, to warrant, if not all the strictures contained in *Jane Eyre*, at any rate the strong attitude taken up by Mr. Nicholls in the discussion in the *Halifax Guardian*.

(2) The letters to M. Héger, published in 1913, show without a doubt that Charlotte was as passionately and characteristically in love with her teacher as Lucy Snowe with M. Paul Emanuel, or Mlle Henri with William Crimsworth. On the other hand, one should not forget the disposition of the writer or

the age in which she lived. It is safe to say that the letters would never have been written had not Charlotte known that in all human probability she would never meet or see M. Héger again.

(3) After the lapse of more than eighty years one can, again, have no doubt that the whole story of Branwell Brontë and the Robinsons has been accepted far too readily and perhaps discussed far too seriously. One can of course understand that Mrs. Gaskell, only a few years after her conversation with Charlotte at Haworth, in which she learnt all about Branwell—

> the child
> Of many hopes and many tears—

might naturally take the whole tale for truth; but even in Abbé Dimnet's book, written so recently as 1911, and translated into English in 1924, we still find the old fabrication, repeated without comment, that on Branwell's death his pockets were found stuffed full of love-letters from his employer's wife. The whole affair was the invention of the young profligate, and Charlotte's credulity, which Mrs. Gaskell followed, is somewhat surprising. Indeed Branwell's complete unreliability is emphasized by one striking fact. He told Charlotte and succeeded in persuading her that by Mr. Robinson's will his widow was to be disinherited should she remarry—to prevent Branwell, presumably, from getting both

his wife and his estate; and we have the oft-told tale, which bears all the mark of improbability about it, that a letter came to Branwell announcing Mr. Robinson's death, that he 'danced down the churchyard as if he were out of his mind' until two mysterious messengers arrived post-haste, and Branwell interviewed them at the 'Black Bull', and learned from them that Mrs. Robinson was forbidden by the will ever to set eyes upon him again. Unfortunately for our belief in Branwell's veracity wills are public property, and Mr. Robinson's testament contained no embargo upon his widow's remarriage. And the servant at the parsonage at the time of Branwell's death, who saw his dead body, solemnly stated that no love-letters of any kind were found.

(4) Much has been written in support of the ridiculous theory that Emily Brontë did not write, could not have written, *Wuthering Heights*. It has been maintained, almost ludicrously, in view of Charlotte's preface to the later edition of the work, that Charlotte had a hand in it herself; and it has also been widely held, with little more plausibility, that Branwell either wrote it or assisted in its composition. Francis Leyland pathetically tries to show that certain of Branwell's later unpublished work has in certain passages a definite resemblance to some parts of *Wuthering Heights*, and then there is also a tale of a meeting with Branwell at an inn between Haworth

and Keighley when he flourished some pages of the manuscript of the novel. But without going into what may be called the internal evidence, this particular controversy is surely settled without the shadow of a doubt by external proof. In a letter which Charlotte wrote to Mr. Williams a few days after her brother's death she says, 'My unhappy brother never knew what his sisters had done in literature—he was not aware that they had ever published a line. We could not tell him of our efforts, for fear of causing him too deep a pang of remorse for his own time misspent and talents misapplied. Now he will *never* know.' Had Francis Leyland known of that decisive letter, most of his book would have been completely unnecessary; but even without it, one cannot long peruse Branwell's effusions in prose and verse without being entirely convinced that he never had the ability to have had even the smallest share in the composition of *Wuthering Heights*, though it may well be that some parts of his life and career supplied his sister with certain darker knowledge which she reproduced in her novel.

(5) The real riddle of the Brontës, one which will never be solved, is the enigma of Emily, her novel, her poems, her life, her genius, and all that concerns her personality. What was the origin of the epic greatness of the story of Heathcliff and Catherine, whence sprang the violence and morbid passion of

her stupendous novel, whence the haunting melancholy and the philosophy of her poems? Her birth from an Irish father and a Cornish mother, coupled with long years of solitude upon the Yorkshire moors, reading from German authors, and romantic longings, a combination which, it might be thought, could explain almost any rare manifestation of genius, are not enough, it has been said, to account for these phenomena. Some have therefore felt convinced that there must have been some unknown experience, some reality, some frustrated devotion, perhaps, to bring them to birth. Yet it is futile, and perhaps even both irritating and sacrilegious, to make wild conjectures. One book written about the Brontës is largely dependent on the theory that Emily, like Charlotte, had a love affair, but one which was less distant and remote, and not confined like her sister's to a one-sided correspondence; and so the author invents the idea that Emily was consumed with passion for Mr. Weightman, the curate, and that they met and walked together upon the moors. Surely the conclusion of the whole matter is that Emily Brontë and her work must be left as one of the insoluble problems of literary history—the spontaneous budding of a wild genius which flourished in a strange manner which weaker mortals cannot fathom.

APPENDIX I

PORTRAITS

Mrs. Gaskell described Charlotte Brontë as slight, thin, undeveloped, with soft brown hair, brown eyes, a broad high forehead, and a low, sweet voice. There are three original pictures of her. The most famous is the beautiful crayon portrait by George Richmond, R.A., which Mr. Nicholls bequeathed to the National Portrait Gallery, and upon which most of the subsequent pictures of Charlotte are based. It was made in 1850, and like all the artist's pictures shows the skilful use of light and shade on brow, nose, and chin. One of Charlotte's friends, Mary Taylor, said it was flattering, while Mr. Brontë said it made her look too old.

Next there is the right-hand figure in the group painted by Branwell Brontë somewhere about 1835, which used to hang at the top of the stairs at Haworth Parsonage. This picture of the three sisters[1] is also in the National Portrait Gallery, having been discovered in Ireland in 1914, and acquired by purchase.

The National Portrait Gallery also possesses a doubtful portrait, signed Paul Héger, which resembles the figure of Charlotte in Branwell's group. It may have been painted from recollection by M. Paul Héger, son of M. and Mme Héger, who would remember Charlotte from his early childhood.

Branwell had painted two grouped pictures of his sisters, that above-mentioned, in which all three are full-face, and another in which they were presumably in profile. Both, so

[1] Facing page 24.

Mr. Shorter tells us, came into Mr. Nicholls's possession after Mr. Brontë's death. In the latter Mr. Nicholls thought that the only accurate portrait was that of Emily, and so he cut it out and destroyed the rest. This portrait was also discovered in Ireland in 1914 and was purchased by the National Portrait Gallery. It is said by some that this is not a portrait of Emily but of Anne, and certainly the copy of it in the new Haworth Museum is labelled with the name of Anne.

We have again a water-colour portrait made by Charlotte of her sister Anne. It is in the Haworth Museum and is inscribed on the back, 'Portrait of Anne Brontë, by her sister Charlotte Brontë, June 17th, 1834'.

There are two likenesses of Branwell Brontë in existence, both of which were sold after Mr. Nicholls's death. One is the Medallion by J. B. Leyland, which shows very clearly the massive brow and weak chin, and the other is a rather handsome silhouette.

APPENDIX II

CHRONOLOGY

Mar. 17, 1777. Patrick Brontë born.
1802. Patrick Brontë becomes an undergraduate at St. John's College, Cambridge.
1806. Patrick Brontë ordained.
1811–15. Patrick Brontë curate-in-charge at Hartshead.
Dec. 29, 1812. Marriage of Patrick Brontë and Maria Branwell.
1813. Maria Brontë born.
1815. Elizabeth Brontë born.
1815–20. The Brontës at Thornton.
Apr. 21, 1816. Charlotte Brontë born.
1817. Patrick Branwell Brontë born.
1818. Emily Jane Brontë born.
1820. Anne Brontë born.
1820. Removal to Haworth.
Sept. 15, 1821. Mrs. Brontë died.
1825. Maria and Elizabeth Brontë died.
Feb. 1842–Jan. 1844. Brussels.
May 1846. Publication of Poems by Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell.
Oct. 1847. Publication of *Jane Eyre.*
Dec. 1847. Publication of *Wuthering Heights* and *Agnes Grey.*
July 1848. Publication of *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall.*
Sept. 24, 1848. Branwell Brontë died.

Dec. 19, 1848. Emily Brontë died.
May 28, 1849. Anne Brontë died.
Oct. 1849. Publication of *Shirley.*
Jan. 1853. Publication of *Villette.*
June 29, 1854. Marriage of Charlotte Brontë and Rev. Arthur Bell Nicholls.
Mar. 31, 1855. Death of Charlotte Brontë.
1857. Publication of *The Professor.*
June 7, 1861. Rev. Patrick Brontë died.
1879. Destruction of the Old Church at Haworth.
1906. Rev. A. B. Nicholls died.
1928. Haworth Rectory became the Brontë Museum.

APPENDIX III

BIBLIOGRAPHY

THE following works, in addition to the novels and poems of the three Brontë sisters, have been read and consulted for the purpose of compiling this record:

Mrs. Gaskell's *Life of Charlotte Brontë* (1857).

Pictures of the Past, by Francis H. Grundy, C.E. Griffith & Farran (1908).

A. Mary F. Robinson's *Emily Brontë* in Eminent Women Series (1883), W. H. Allen.

The Brontë Family: with Special Reference to Patrick Branwell Brontë, by Francis A. Leyland. 2 vols. Hurst & Blackett (1886).

Swinburne's Miscellanies. Chatto & Windus (1886).

The Brontës in Ireland, by William Wright, D.D. Hodder & Stoughton (1894).

The Brontës—Life and Letters, by Clement Shorter. Hodder & Stoughton (1908).

The Brontës and their Circle, by Clement Shorter. Wayfarers' Library (1914). First published 1896.

The Brontë Sisters, by Ernest Dimnet. Jonathan Cape (1926). Translated from the French by Louise Morgan Sill. First published in French in 1911.

Haworth Parsonage—A Picture of the Brontë Family, by Isabel C. Clarke. Hutchinson (1927).

All Alone—The Life and Private History of Emily Brontë, by Romer Wilson. Chatto & Windus (1928).

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN AT THE UNIVERSITY PRESS, OXFORD
BY JOHN JOHNSON, PRINTER TO THE UNIVERSITY

E/I 70 CL

SUGDEN